

**Making a positive difference to social care and early years in Wales**

Our Business Plan 2025/27

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**Business Plan 2025/27**

**Introduction**

We want to support services in Wales to improve in line with the ambitions of the [Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act,](https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/information-and-learning-hub/sswbact/overview) the Welsh Government’s [A Healthier Wales Plan for Health and Social Care](https://www.gov.wales/healthier-wales-long-term-plan-health-and-social-care) and the [Children and Young People’s Plan](https://www.gov.wales/children-and-young-peoples-plan), to provide care closer to home and improve the quality of support for children and adults of all ages.

We’re a key partner working with Welsh Government on their [Programme for Government 2021-2026](https://www.gov.wales/programme-government), which makes commitments in relation to social care and early years and childcare, such as:

* introducing a real living wage for social care
* increasing apprenticeships in care
* recruiting more Welsh speakers
* delivering the Anti Racist Wales Action Plan
* integration of health and social care
* delivering a phased expansion of early years provision to include all two-year-olds with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh medium provision.
* continuing to support Flying Start programmes
* eliminating profit from care of children looked after
* developing an implementation plan for the development of a National Care Service that will be free at the point of access.

People working in social care, early years and childcare go above and beyond to deliver services that improve outcomes for the people of Wales. Supporting individuals and families in every community, the social care sector protects children, adults and older adults and helps them to do what matters to them.

Over 80,000 people work in the social care sector in Wales, with around 17,500 more working in the early years and childcare sector. Daily there will be around 140,000 children and adults receiving care and support services across Wales with a further 78,000 children using early years and childcare services in Wales. We’ve provided more context on the social care and early years sector on page 45 or there’s more information on our website [Data and information on the social care workforce… | Social Care Wales](https://socialcare.wales/research-and-data/workforce-reports).

We want the social care, early years and childcare workforce to be motivated, engaged and valued, with the capacity, competence and confidence to meet the care and support needs of the people of Wales. But the social care, early years and childcare sector continues to face major workforce and sector wide challenges. It’s difficult to attract people into the sector, recruit enough staff and retain the existing workforce.

Social care, early years and childcare services are committed to supporting what matters to children, adults and their carers across every community in Wales. The delivery of health and social care to the people of Wales is entirely dependent on our workforce. The well-being of the workforce is incredibly important, both for people providing and receiving care. Compassionate and high-quality care is delivered best by individuals who are positive about their role and the organisation they work in. We’re committed to supporting the sector and want well-being at the heart of our plans for the workforce.

Staff well-being is also affected by increased levels of stress, fatigue and burnout, along with working conditions which are perceived to be poor and a lack of professional development opportunities. It's a priority for all stakeholders to work together to solve these workforce issues. We must act quickly to deal with existing challenges and attract new people into the workforce. We need to create the right conditions to allow people to deliver high-quality services.

A vital ingredient in the design of high-quality services is ensuring that people working in social care have the skills and confidence to design, develop, adapt and embed the best ways of working. As set out in Ymlaen, our strategy for research, innovation and improvement in social care in Wales, an important focus for us is helping to create a culture in social care where evidence is central to delivery and used to inform decisions at all levels, and where people feel inspired and supported to try new things.

Celebrating and sharing the excellent work of our social care and early years and childcare services is key to our work. 74%[[1]](#footnote-2) of social care services were rated as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’ in Care Inspectorate Wales’ unpublished ratings exercise in 2023. We know from what workers have told us that many don’t feel appreciated by the public for the invaluable work they do. We’re determined to change this by raising awareness and improving the profile of our workforce. We’re committed to supporting our skilled, dedicated and compassionate social care, early years and childcare workforce and encouraging others to join the profession.

We will use our regulatory powers and our workforce development and improvement functions to raise the profile of the sector, support professionals to deliver evidence informed practice and take action when fitness to practise issues emerge.

We’re committed to continuing our leadership role, working with partners to respond to challenges. We want to continue our journey to embed a culture of active engagement across all our work so we can respond to the changing needs of the social care and early years sectors. We’re committed to listening and responding to the views and needs of adults and children who use care and support, their families and those working in the sector to inform our work, by working with national umbrella organisations, commissioners and providers to capture those views.

There are no quick fixes, but we’re committed to driving the change that our social care and childcare and early years workforce needs and deserves, so in turn services can remain focussed on supporting what matters to people and their families in every community in Wales.

Our 2-year Business Plan sets out what we will do and how we will work with partners to address the challenges and help make these ambitions a reality, building on the momentum we have created to deliver the outcomes set out in our [strategic plan](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/our-outcomes).

**What is our Business Plan 2025/27**

Our Business Plan is written for Welsh Government as it sets out our activities and budget based on the priorities in our Remit Letter 2025/26. Our Remit Letter is set by the Minister for Children and Social Care, Dawn Bowden MS. We have developed a 2-year Business Plan but recognise that with Welsh Government Senedd elections in May 2026, we may need to refresh commitments in light of a new programme for government and Remit Letter.

Any changes to the Business Plan will be subject to in-year review by the Executive Management Team and reported to the Board.

We know that there is a lot of detail in our Business Plan for the next 2 years. For us the three key areas of priority for the next two years are delivering:

* focus on the [Workforce strategy](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/workforce-strategy) through the implementation of the social care workforce delivery plan and workforce planning
* implementing the Registration Transformation Programme, to improve registered peoples and employer experience and efficiency
* work in partnership to deliver the priorities for service innovation, improvement and research as set out in [Ymlaen](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/ymlaen-the-research-innovation-and-improvement-strategy-for-the-social-care-sector-2024-to-2029)

More information and detail on the context and specific areas of our work can be found on [**www.socialcare.wales**](http://www.socialcare.wales/) . This also includes information on our [**Board**](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/our-board/our-board-members)and how they make decisions, get value for money and are open and clear about what people can expect from us.

Our Business Plan supports our [**vision and outcomes**](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/our-outcomes) set out in our [**5 year Strategic Plan**](https://socialcare.wales/cms-assets/documents/Strategic-Plan-2022-2027-FINAL.docx).  We also want to start working with people on developing a new strategic plan during the period of this plan.

You will find out more about what actions we will be taking during the next 2 years, details about our budget and how progress on our Business Plan will be measured in the following section. These sections have been set out under our 8 outcomes as set out in our 5-year strategic plan. We’ve included examples of our strategic plan measures and data that we have from the past few years. We’ve also made references to our Remit Letter priorities in these sections. We report on the changes and trends in these national measures as part of our annual impact report.

We’ve also included our key activities and will report on our progress on a quarterly basis.

**Our Business Plan framework: 2025/27**

**Improved well-being for the social care and early years workforce**

The well-being of the workforce is a key focus for us and is a main theme in the [workforce strategy for health and social care](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/workforce-strategy).

We want the workforce to feel valued and supported wherever they work, so that they in turn support the well-being of the people in their care. We use the following long-term strategic plan indicators to consider if our, and external partners work, is supporting positive change:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Workforce Survey[[2]](#footnote-3)** | **2023/24 (Baseline)** | **2024/25** | **2025-27 trend ambition** |
| % workforce feel supported by colleagues | 78% | 79% | Maintain |
| % supported by managers | 76% | 70% | Increase |
| % workforce stating that their morale was good | 65% | 77% | Increase |
| % workforce stating they struggled to switch off when they leave work | 63% | 57% | Decrease |
| % workforce suggested they had enough support to deal with stress | 31% | 41% | Increase |
| % workforce suggested they attended work at least twice in the past year despite being ill | - | 52% | Decrease |

In 2025/27 we will:

**(RL 1.2) Develop initiatives to support and improve the wellbeing of the workforce such as**

* increasing awareness of our [on-line wellbeing resources](https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/health-and-well-being-resources)
* a review and update of the [Health and Wellbeing Framework](https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/health-and-well-being-resources/your-wellbeing-matters-workforce-health-and-wellbeing-framework) and supporting resources by March 2026
* run and evaluate at least 4 information and awareness sessions a year that support the wellbeing of people working in the sector
* nurture and evaluate our wellbeing networks and community of practice to ensure they provide effective sharing, learning and support

**Continue, with lead organisations, to support the ambition for the delivery of an engaged, motivated and valued health and social care workforce so that we**

* develop an engagement and consultation plan for Phase 3 of the [workforce strategy](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/workforce-strategy) by December 2025
* publish an annual report on the progress of the workforce strategy delivery plan each Autumn
* convene the Social Care Workforce Delivery Plan Strategic Implementation Group on a quarterly basis

**(RL 6.2) Working with other stakeholders, support international workers in the social care sector, by providing information to employers such as**

* resources and best practice examples to support international workers
* run and evaluate at least 2 sessions for employers on topics with a focus on international workers
* refresh our website by September to offer employers a place to access information and advice.
* continue to improve our data through modifications to our Register application and renewal forms, as well as gathering information on sponsorship amongst providers through the 2025 data gathering exercise.

**A social care and early years workforce that is highly recognised and valued**

Our social care and early years workforce deserve recognition and fair reward that reflects the crucial part they play in the well-being of people and communities. (RL 1.1) We will continue to maintain oversight of the sectors needs and consider the different support and development required to enhance a whole system approach. We use the following long-term strategic plan indicators to understand if our, and external partners work is supporting positive change:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Omnibus Survey[[3]](#footnote-4)** | **2022/23** | **2024/25** | **2025-27 trend ambition** |
| % of people with a higher opinion of people working in social care than they did three years ago | 22% | 32% | Monitor |
| % of people with a higher opinion of people working in early years than they did three years ago | - | 24% | Monitor |
| % of people think people working in social care should receive similar pay and benefits to people working in the NHS | 78% | - | Monitor |
| **Workforce Survey** | **2023/24** | **2024/25** | **2025-7 trend ambition** |
| % of the workforce feel valued by the people they support | 76% | 80% | Increase |
| % of the workforce who feel valued by the public | 44% | 51% | Increase |
| % of the workforce happy with their terms and conditions | 60% | 68% | Increase |
| % of the workforce dissatisfied with their pay | 57% | 46% | Decrease |
| % of the workforce satisfied with their pay | 27% | 35% | Increase |

In 2025/27 we will:

**Provide national leadership to influence social care and early years policy, service delivery and improvement in the provision of person centred care and support such as**

* working in partnership through key networks and stakeholders to support, influence and inform relevant social care and early years developments.
* carrying out and report on perception surveys on a biennial basis
* actively responding to 100% of consultations where we can provide quality evidence

**Share good practice with others and champion the work of the social care and early years sector​, including**

* plan, deliver and evaluate the 2025 Accolades, sharing the good practice of the finalists and thoroughly review our approach to future Accolades to maintain 9/10 evaluation score
* continue to promote the Welsh language through the annual Caring in Welsh Award, increasing the numbers of people voting
* our work set out in our strengths based practice and innovation outcomes on pages 23 - 26

**Developing a service to support employers which means**

* deliver and evaluate at least three employer events a year
* producing quarterly reports on employer feedback to inform how we can improve our services and support
* scope and develop a single point of contact for employers through our website

**(RL 2.2) Take forward the development of the Social Care Fair Work Forum Pay and progression framework by**

* continuing to be active members of the Welsh Government’s Social Care Fair Work Forum
* leading further developments on the draft pay and progression framework developed by the Social Care Fair Work Forum such that an agreed voluntary framework is published by April 2026.

**Social care and early years services that attract, recruit and retain people**

We’re already experiencing shortages in many occupations across several social care and early years services and settings. We need to increase our efforts in how we market and promote the variety and number of opportunities available. We want social care, early years and childcare to be well established as a strong and recognisable brand and the sector of choice for our future workforce. We use the following long-term strategic plan indicators to track if our, and external partners work is supporting positive change:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Workforce Strategy** | **2022** | | **2023** | **2025-7 trend ambition** |
| % of vacancies as a proportion of the sector | 9% | | 6% | Maintain |
| % of employers reporting challenges in availability of staff | **-** | | 71% | Reduce |
| **(RL 2.5) WeCare Wales Perception Survey** | **2022** | | **2024** |  |
| % of people who are attracted to work in social care | 24% | | 25% | Increase |
| % of people who are attracted to work in children’s social care | 24% | | 26% | Increase |
| % of people who are attracted to work in early years and childcare | 32% | | 29% | Maintain around 30% |
| **Reach of campaign** | **2023** | | |  |
| % of population the TV campaigns reach | 46% | | | Maintain |
| **Workforce Survey** | **2023/24** | **2024/25** | |  |
| % started working in social care because they wanted a job that would make a difference to people’s lives | 63% | 69% | | Context data |
| % found out about working in social care through friends and family working in the sector | 48% | 48% | | Context data |
| % aiming to leave the sector | 26% | 25% | | Decrease |

In 2025/27 we will:

**(RL 2.6, 6.1, 6.3) Raise awareness of social care and early years and play roles through national campaigns, learning resources and training programmes including**

* run and evaluate at least 7 regional campaigns/spotlights a year to promote social care and early years
* increase people viewing the We Care Wales website
* increase the number of jobs advertised on the on-line jobs portal
* maintain diversity and increase the annual number of individuals completing the Introduction to social care programmes
* increase the annual number of individuals completing the Introduction to Childcare programmes
* undertake a review of the introduction to social care programme by Autumn 2025

**(RL 2.5) Develop a framework that supports organisations to improve retention through**

* develop a framework with known tools, resources and guidance to support effective staff retention in social care
* undertake user testing of the retention framework prior to launch in Quarter 4
* develop additional resources, tools and guidance that serves to fill the gaps identified to complete the framework

**​(RL 6.6) Provide financial support to social work students to support them in their studies via funding pathways such as**

* provide eligible students with a bursary
* provide support and advice to all bursary students

**(RL 2.1, 6.5) Give a grant which provides training and development opportunities for people employed in social care (SCWWDP) which includes:**

* issuing 7 grants that meet the annual circular requirements and cover all local authority areas in Wales
* production of an annual report to monitor the grant that synthesise, summarise and curate data and evidence

**Building and nurturing excellent Social Work professional practice such as**

* to convene and increase the numbers on the Practice Educator Hub group to bring people together to address common issues
* review current support available for social workers in their first year of practice by the end of March 2026
* refresh the Social Work workforce delivery plan for launch in early 2026/27

**(RL 2.3) Support improvement in workforce planning for social services across Wales, including:**

* by the end of March 2026 develop a proposal for a national function / expert resource to support Strategic Workforce Planning
* develop an online workforce planning framework by Quarter 3
* create a workforce planning network by Quarter 2 to encourage collaboration, peer to peer support and advice

**A registered social care workforce that has the public’s confidence**

We protect the public by making sure the regulated workforce is registered and fit to practise. People who rely on care and support can be sure that a registered worker is suitably qualified and has agreed to meet the professional standards we have set for the sector. We use the following long-term strategic plan indicators to track if our, and external partners work is supporting positive change:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Omnibus Survey** | **2023/24** | **2024/25** | **2025-7 trend ambition** |
| % of people have confidence in people who work in social care | 72% | 73% | Increase |
| % of people know what an acceptable standard of care would be like | 82% | 86% | Increase |
| % of people who think social care workers and social workers are regulated | 63% | 55% | Increase |
| % of people who would know how to report a social care worker who is suspected of not working to the standards expected of them | 29% | 32% | Increase |
| % of people who think childcare and early years workers are regulated | 70% | 66% | Monitor |
| % of people who know what an acceptable standard of childcare is | 83% | 84% | Monitor |
| % of people who agree that people should receive care in Welsh (if that’s their language of choice) | 67% | 73% | Monitor |

In 2025/27 we will:

**(RL 2.1, 4.1) Maintain the professional workforce Register of social care workers​ by**

* maintain the register of social care workers, processing all applications within 28 days and no more than 3% of the Register being outstanding applications at any time.
* register new groups specifically Residential Special School workers, in line with timelines set out by the Welsh Government and legislation.

**(RL 2.1) Deliver an effective Fitness to Practise process which means to**

* undertake investigations of allegations against social care workers, monitoring and reporting on number of opened cases as a % of the Register.
* seek to undertake investigations and disposals in a timely manner, with 80% of all cases being completed within 18 months, and 85% of such cases being completed where Social Care Wales is not waiting on the actions of another regulator or public body[[4]](#footnote-5).
* hold all Regulatory panel hearings in accordance with the Rules
* report and consider any appeals to the Care Standards Tribunal
* take forward Year 1 activities identified in the Fitness to Practice improvement plan, achieving all milestones within the agreed project plan
* continue to provide wellbeing support for registered people undergoing a fitness to practise process, as well as those engaged as witnesses or those raising concerns

**(RL 2.1) Publish Codes of Practice and develop practice guidance**

* following the consultation on the Codes of Practice, we will publish and promote the revised Codes of Practice through a variety of channels which will improve awareness amongst social care workers and users of care and support services alike
* develop, publish and promote practice guidance resources, following engagement with the sector

**(RL 2.1) Review and improve how we regulate which includes, as examples**

* implement further efficiencies on how we regulate, and continue to report on costs of regulations
* implement requirements following legal clarifications in relation to employment law
* review internal and external assurance mechanisms, including an evaluation of the Decision Review group by the end of the financial year.

**(RL 4.2) Improve our registration service**

* progress requirements to support the registration change programme such that identified benefits within the programme plan can begin to be delivered in 2026/27

**A social care and early years workforce that is suitably qualified, knowledgeable and skilled with the right values, behaviours and practice**

To meet current and future demands, the workforce needs high-quality learning and development to give them the right knowledge, skills, understanding and approach to provide good quality care and support in the social care and early years sectors. We use the following long-term strategic plan indicators to track if our, and external partners work is supporting positive change:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Omnibus Survey** | **2023/24** | **2024/25** | **2025-27 trend ambition** |
| % of people think residential care workers are always skilled and professional in the work they do | 67% | 67% | Increase |
| % of people think home care workers are always skilled and professional in the work they do | 65% | 65% | Increase |
| % of people think early years and childcare workers are always skilled and professional in the work they do | 69% | 67% | Increase |
| **Workforce survey** | **23/24** | **24/25** | **2025-7 trend ambition** |
| % of the workforce who say they get the right training to do their job well | 79% | 87% | Maintain |
| % of the workforce requiring more training to progress their career | 47% | 47% | Context data |
| % of the workforce that said they had no issues in accessing work-related training | 65% | 65% | Increase |
| % said they could speak at least some Welsh | 45% | 40% | Increase |

In 2025/27 we will:

**(RL 2.1) Provide assurance on the quality of Social Work programmes in Wales such as**

* complete and report to the Board, via the Regulation and Standards Committee on 24/25 annual monitoring in December 2025. The report will provide information on quality assurance activity for this period as well as any thematic reviews.
* undertake discovery research and work with the sector on producing a report setting out options on social work education models

**(RL 2.1, 5.2, 5.3) Support the development, delivery and implementation of qualifications, Continuous Professional Development and frameworks through examples of the following**

* provide an annual report on the work programme around qualifications, standards and assessment in Quarter 2
* convene and evaluate groups and networks to bring people to work together and to address common issues
* implement the Qualification Equivalency Assessment (QEA) process for accepting qualifications not on the Qualification Framework and report on activity levels and outcomes every quarter
* promote and support the implementation of the Social Services Practitioner apprenticeship, to support an increase in apprentices
* promote resources to support the Information Assistance Advice (IAA) competency framework.
* promote and monitor the use of national resources for Essential Skills Qualifications
* map Early years and childcare HEI L4 into EYPS degrees
* work with Scottish Qualifications Authority and Skills for Care and Development partners to review, update and publish National Occupational Standards for health and social care
* undertake a discovery phase on how to improve career pathways and clarity on mandatory training; qualification and CPD requirements following an agreement to the Pay and Progression framework in early 2026.

**(RL 5.2) Work with the sector to deliver induction programmes**

* Plan, deliver and evaluate training and events for social care, including on the All Wales Induction Framework and the Employer Assessment Route
* design, develop, deliver and support implementation of Early Years Managers induction

**(RL 2.1) Promote and support apprenticeships including**

* promote apprenticeship opportunities for health and social care and early years and childcare including participation in and evaluation of apprenticeship week
* do a light touch review of apprenticeship frameworks for health and social care and Early Years and Childcare, in 2025
* contribute to the MEDR (the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research) apprenticeship framework review for Early Years and Childcare
* act as the certifying organisation for Apprenticeship Certification Wales (ACW) on behalf of Welsh Government, for health and social care and children's care, play, learning and development apprenticeship frameworks - levels 2, 3, 4 & 5. 100% of certificates will be issued within timescales and we’ll report on numbers issued on a quarterly basis.

**Sharing good practice and supporting continuous professional development in Early Years and Childcare including:**

* running a week of learning events in November to celebrate the Early Years and Childcare sectors
* deliver an Early Years conference in November to support continuous professional development
* develop and run 7 regional childcare, play and early years hubs
* deliver leadership and management events to the early years and childcare sector
* design and develop tools/resources to strengthen leadership and management in EYCC sector
* pilot the aspiring managers programme for 20 current and future early years and childcare managers over the next 2 years

**(RL 4.3) Support Welsh language in social care and early years services such as**

* continue our North Wales workforce development pilot so that 75% of learners on the pilot increase their skills and demonstrate workplace use.
* expand the pilot using data and evidence of area of most need to two new areas in Wales.
* support social care workers to use and improve their Welsh language skills with 600 people completing the Camau course (Sylfaen) and 300 (Mynediad) each year
* promote the importance of the Welsh language in the social care and early years and childcare sector through events, resources and e learning, and evaluate uptake
* support workers where Welsh or English is not their first language to develop Welsh language and culture awareness and skills
* develop and promote Welsh learning pathways for social care and early years and childcare
* increase the numbers of people in the Welsh Language learning communities of practice

**(RL 5.1) With Health Education Improvement Wales, develop and deliver the *Mental health workforce plan* across health and social care to:**

* co-produce and launch a community for Approved Mental Health Professional leads by Quarter 3
* plan, deliver and evaluate agreed training events to improve knowledge and capability of mental health team managers
* provide guidance and resources to support Local Authorities to train Adult Mental Health Practitioners

**(RL 5.1) Design, develop and support implementation of existing and new Safeguarding tools, approaches and resources such as**

* create a comprehensive and accessible national resource pack for Group C that enhances safeguarding practices across multi-agency partnerships by Quarter 3
* promote and monitor downloads of the national Group B training resources
* deliver six events to promote and implement the Group C resources, to align with the Regional Safeguarding Boards
* convene Review Group for Training Standards and Framework

**(RL 1.3, 5.1, 6.4) Provide national leadership in supporting the sector to be anti-discriminatory and supporting the Welsh Government in its equality ambitions such as**

* develop, promote and evaluate digital Anti Racist e-learning resources
* work with the Terrence Higgins Trust on promoting bilingual and Welsh specific eLearning training resources available for the social care sector ([Can't Pass It On training for social care | Terrence Higgins Trust](https://dev.tht.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/training/cant-pass-it-training-social-care)). The e-learning training resource will go live by June 2025. With usage statistics reported on a quarterly basis
* By the end of the period of this plan, pilot an approach in how we provide support to the social care sector (managers and leaders) around modern slavery in the care sector
* support and promote events as a clear ally and advocate for an anti-discriminatory Wales
* collect data for Workforce Race Equality Standards
* working with partners to deliver actions within the LGBTQ+ action plan, where resources allow, and to continue to support the general ambitions of that plan across our work

**Social care services that embed and deliver strengths-based approaches to care and support**

Putting the person and their needs at the centre of their care and giving them a voice in and control over the outcomes that help them achieve well-being is a key principle of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. People are the experts in their own lives and by working with professionals, they’re best placed to tell us what will help their well-being. (RL 3.2) We’ll continue to be the strategic lead in improvement for social care in Wales including supporting the work of the National Office for Care and Support. We use the following long-term strategic plan indicators to track if our, and external partners work is supporting positive change:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Social Services National Outcomes Framework** | **2022/23[[5]](#footnote-6)** | | **2025-27 trend ambition** |
| % of people who received support and felt involved in decisions about their care and support | 84% | | Increase |
| % of people who received care and support who agreed that they were in control of their daily life as much as they could be | 74% | | Increase |
| **Workforce survey** | **2023/24** | **2024/25** |  |
| % wanted a leadership role in the future | 36% | 47% | Context data |
| % believed it’s possible for them to become a leader | 50% | 60% | Context data |
| % sought progression in the past year | - | 37% | Context data |
| % feel supported by colleagues | 78% | 79% | Maintain |
| % feel supported by manager | 66% | 70% | Increase |
| % feel valued by colleagues | 71% | 80% | Maintain |
| % feel valued by manager | 61% | 70% | Increase |

In 2025/27 we will:

**(RL 7.1) Provide Leadership development programmes which will mean we**

* report and provide evaluation feedback annually on leadership and management programmes – and use the evaluation to continuously improve the programme
* raise awareness and support people to embed the principles of compassionate leadership, including delivery and evaluation of Introduction to Compassionate Leadership sessions
* embed compassionate leadership in our own ways of working
* co-design and launch a new compassionate leadership community or network by Quarter 2 to connect practice and support across Wales, with an evaluation by the start of 26/27
* supporting diversity in leadership by piloting a programme to support people working in social care from an ethnic minority background into management and leadership roles

**(RL 7.1) Providing approaches and resources to support positive cultures within social care including**

* design, develop, deliver and support implementation of new tools, approaches and resources to support positive cultures in partnership with Care Inspectorate Wales
* design approaches to embedding positive cultures for testing in provider settings
* identify, and start working with, six social care providers to participate in testing and evaluation of potential approaches

**(RL 7.1) Develop confidence in the sector on strengths-based outcomes practice which includes**

* support Local Authorities with developing and embedding strengths-based practice
* run and evaluate a national mentors’ network to reflect and share practice
* provide on-line training for the social care workforce on strengths-based conversations and reflective practice

**(RL 2.4) Support the Welsh Government priorities as part of the Transformation of Children's Services through work such as**

* develop a workforce plan for residential children’s care
* through WeCare Wales campaigns, promote and support recruitment and retention of the residential children’s care workforce
* develop a data dashboard on the workforce to share with key partners
* plan and deliver learning opportunities and resources to support workforce development
* manage and evaluate a closed community of practice to help local authorities explore, develop and implement new models of residential children’s care

**Social care practice and policy that is underpinned by innovation, high-quality research, data and other forms of evidence**

Our [Ymlaen](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/ymlaen-the-research-innovation-and-improvement-strategy-for-the-social-care-sector-2024-to-2029) strategy establishes an approach to research, innovation and improvement that's centred on working in collaboration. Delivering the vision of this strategy for people leading, developing and delivering social care will need strong and consistent collaboration across a wide range of partner organisations. We will lead this new strategy and, critically, work with partners to deliver it. (RL 3.4) We’ll work closely with Health and Care Research Wales and the social care research community to promote and support high quality research in a transparent and collaborative way. We use the following long-term strategic plan indicators to track if our, and external partners work is supporting positive change:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Social Services National Outcomes Framework** | **2022/3** | | **2025-7 trend ambition** |
| % of people who received care and support who agreed it has helped them have a better quality of life | 77% | | Increase |
| % of people receiving care and support rated it as excellent or good | 80% | | Increase |
| **Workforce survey** | **2023/24** | **2024/25** |  |
| % wanted a leadership role in the future | 36% | 47% | Context data |
| % believed it’s possible for them to become a leader | 50% | 60% | Context data |
| % sought progression in the past year | - | 37% | Context data |
| % feel supported by colleagues | 78% | 79% | Maintain |
| % feel supported by manager | 66% | 70% | Increase |
| % feel valued by colleagues | 71% | 80% | Maintain |
| % feel valued by manager | 61% | 70% | Increase |

In 2025/27 we will:

**(RL 3.1) Take forward actions for people leading, developing and delivering social care to feel confident, supported and inspired to use evidence and innovation (Ymlaen)**

* oversee the delivery of Ymlaen, our research, innovation and improvement strategy:
* set up Ymlaen governance by June 2025
* develop an implementation plan with partners for 2025/26
* work with partners to deliver Ymlaen
* further develop, maintain and promote the Insight Collective and increase the number of users, unique users and page views
* explore different ways we can work with local authorities to improve the impact of our research, innovation and improvement services

**(RL 3.3) Maintain an effective data portal to make better use of data and evidence to improve services and outcomes for people**

* increase the numbers of unique users and page views to the National social care data portal for Wales
* increase the sources of data and projections available on the portal
* make comprehensive and meaningful social care workforce data available in different formats (including via Workforce Insights and data summaries), drawing from the Register, our workforce survey, the workforce data we collect from providers and local authorities, and other sources of research
* work with Care Inspectorate Wales to develop a unified approach to workforce data collection for launch in 2026

**(RL 5.1) Building skills and mobilising knowledge to improve practice using evidence**

* Convene and evaluate 8 learning events annually for each of the Communities of Practice:
* Evidence community
* Responsible Individuals’ community
* Placed-based care community of practice
* New models of children's residential care community
* implement our offer of support for people developing communities of practice, and provide an evaluation and recommendations on the offer by Quarter 4
* design, develop, deliver and support implementation of DEEP methods, tools, approaches and resources, including running 2 Catalyst training courses each year
* with partners, explore ways to support evidence lead roles in local authorities
* develop and deliver a coherent knowledge mobilisation offer
* promote and evaluate the research, innovation and improvement skills resource
* provide support, coaching and advice on how individuals and organisations can improve the measurement and reporting of their impact and learning through our 1:1 support and our Demystifying Evaluation training, with two series (5 sessions each) running each year, and 60 attendees at each series.

**(RL 1.1) Increase knowledge, understanding and skills by generating and supporting social care research**

* implement and promote a Research Support and Engagement Framework and report every quarter on the research projects we're going to support
* set the top 10 priorities for research, innovation and improvement in social care
* develop, deliver and implement an annual workforce survey with at least 5,000 responses each year
* produce 7 high quality evidence summaries and 2 workforce insight series briefings annually

**Provide leadership for the Administrative Data Research Wales social care theme (until March 2026)**

* maintain an adult social care data research group to explore and grow the use of linked data research in Wales
* run a placement scheme for a PhD student to develop their skills and knowledge about sharing social care data
* publish the results of a priority-setting exercise for linked data research
* develop research questions and identify datasets to address the priorities identified

**Lead the *Strategic approach to social care data in Wales,* including (subject to funding from the Connecting Care and National Data Resource Programmes)**

* lead the development of data standards for adults’ and children’s social care
* create data communities of practice for social care in Wales
* lead the development of social care standards for implementing Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources
* as part of the National Data Resource programme, support social care providers with compliance in data protection guidelines by using a digital solution for information governance documentation
* share findings and action plan following the data maturity exercise
* play our part in supporting the implementation of the Connecting Care system across local authorities in Wales

**Supporting digital developments in the sector**

* promote the digital literacy and maturity assessment tool for people working in social care to self-assess and identify learning needs, as well as providing a national view of digital change and development
* explore with Welsh Government and other partners the implementation of the findings from the digital literacy and maturity assessment
* actively contribute in policy and working groups to influence and support digital and AI
* subject to funding, support capability building in digital skills across social care in Wales, including establishing a community of interest to support this work

**Develop a range of services to support innovation in social care**

* work with Ymlaen partners across health and social care, in Wales and further afield, to develop and promote support offers for innovation in social care
* gather at least 10 examples of good practice in social care and publish and promote them through our Insight Collective Project Finder
* raise awareness of innovation coaching benefits through 6 engagement sessions per year
* build innovation capability in the social care workforce with a 70% conversion rate of coaching enquiries into coaching support (up to the capacity available for coaching support)
* provide innovation coaching support and advice, with four innovation projects coached per quarter

**Social Care Wales provides effective, high quality and sustainable services**

We will show openness and transparency of our decision making (governance) in how we work and how we spend public money. As a national leadership organisation, we have a responsibility to lead by example in the way we work. We use the following long-term strategic plan indicators:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** | **2025-27 trend ambition** |
| Perception surveys | - | - | Context data |
| Organisational effectiveness reviews | - | - | Context data |
| Staff engagement score | - | 91% | Maintain |
| Enforcement notices | 0 | 0 | Maintain |
| Formal complaints | 0 | 1 | Increase |
| Annual Accounts laid | August 2023 | November 2024 | Timescales |
| Impact report published | December 2023 | September 2024 | Timescales |
| Business Plan approved | July 2023 | November 2024 | Timescales |

In 2025/27 we will:

**(RL 8.1, 8.2) Work and measure our impact in line with legislation and governance framework​**

* publish annual reports on how we’re managing our resources by September
* produce and maintain our governance arrangements and frameworks
* show our compliance that we’re working in line with the Future Generations Act; Social Partnership Duty, Welsh Language Standards; Equalities; Data Protection
* deliver effective management of our Board and Committees
* undertake a discovery review our approach to data governance
* start work on the development of our next strategic plan

**Manage our financial viability and value for money​**

* maintain effective financial and internal audit controls achieving a 4% monthly cash balance and 80% of Internal Audit receiving substantial/moderate rating
* take forward actions set out in our action plan to support implementation of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023

**(RL 8.3) Manage our sustainability and environmental impact as an organisation**

* implement year 3 of our Environmental, sustainability and governance in procurement strategy
* implement our 2030 net zero Carbon action plan
* maintain business continuity arrangements and plans with 2 scenarios tested annually

**Develop and supporting our staff**

* roll out year 2 of our organisational learning and development programme with 90% of plan completion annually
* implement the Job Evaluation Grading Scheme (JEGS) from April 2025
* deliver year 1 of our Health and Wellbeing strategy with sickness levels no more than 3% and turnover no more than 15%
* review, develop and maintain HR policies and procedures

**Market and communicate to our audiences**

* develop, publish and implement the remaining chapters of the marketing and communications playbook
* develop and implement marketing plans to improve the reach and take-up of our services and support with workforce, providers and local authorities
* increase the numbers of people visiting our website (more than 70,000 unique views)

**Deliver integrated, secure digital solutions, support and upskill staff to provide high-quality, sustainable digital services that meet user need**

* build our digital and data capability by providing clear guidance and support
* define our digital and technology standards and governance by reviewing and implementing a new digital strategy
* design, develop and deliver digital products that support our teams, using our new digital and technology front door to identify potential solutions, including how we leverage the Dynamics platform to improve individuals experience and reach of our services
* ensure that we have sustainable, secure and connected digital infrastructure and connectivity, including maintaining our Cyber Security Essentials and ISO27001 accreditations

**Develop and implement an anti-discriminatory and equitable organisational approach**

* establish and pilot an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion expert reference group in 2025/26
* implement a training programme for Equality Impact Assessments
* deliver relevant Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training and awareness for our workforce
* develop principles to support the development of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategic plan in 2026/27

**Cross cutting themes**

We have a number of themes that work across our activities for the 2 years.

In this section you will find out more detail on how we’re working on specific topics across our work.

* **Future Generations**
* **Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023**
* **Iaith Gymraeg**
* **Equality, Diversity and inclusion**
* **Information Governance**
* **Net zero**
* **Our values**
* **User-centred design – engagement model**
* **Key facts and figures**

You will see what work we will be doing this year with the social care and early sector and within our organisation on these areas.

**Future Generations**

We’re committed to delivering our work in line with the 7 well-being goals and 5 ways of working set out in the [Future Generations Act](https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/).

Below we have given examples of how our work in 2025/27 with the social care and early years sector will show how we’ll be working in line with the Act:

**Long-term**

Our strategic plan sets the longer-term outcomes we’re aiming to achieve, whilst our Business Plan sets out the activities and outputs, we’re delivering to support longer term aspirations. One example relates to the delivery of actions from the [Workforce Strategy](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/workforce-strategy), [strategic mental health workforce plan for health and social care](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/workforce-strategy/strategic-mental-health-workforce-plan), and the [social work workforce plan](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/workforce-strategy/social-work-workforce-plan-2022-to-2025), which shows how we’re balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.

**Integration**

An example of integration is the work we deliver with Welsh Government, [Social Care Fair Work Forum](https://www.gov.wales/social-care-fair-work-forum), WLGA, ADSSC and others to deliver Fair Work for the social care sector, which supports ambitions for a Fairer Wales.

**Involvement**

One of the ways we’re improving the way we involve people is through our annual workforce survey, which is capturing feedback from the registered workforce about their well-being, their profiles, their challenges and their aspirations. This will enable us to measure how well the social care workforce reflects the diversity of the Welsh population, and provide evidence to inform attraction, recruitment and retention activities.

**Collaboration**

Our [**Ymlaen**](https://socialcare.wales/about-us/ymlaen-the-research-innovation-and-improvement-strategy-for-the-social-care-sector-2024-to-2029) strategy sets out how we will establish an approach to research, innovation and improvement that's centred on working in collaboration. Agreeing priorities together will help us decide where we should focus our collective efforts.

**Prevention**

The [WeCare Wales](https://wecare.wales/) attraction campaign, the jobs portal and the support we provide to introduce people to the social care and early years sectors are a variety of ways we’re looking to maintain the current workforce and attract new entrants. This is essential to ensure there is sufficient workforce to meet people’s care needs and, in turn, support the well-being and independence of citizens.

**How we work**

We became responsible for working in line with the Future Generations Act from 30 June 2024 onwards. We’ll be:

* Embedding in our organisational learning and development programme training and guidance for our staff on how to show the 5 ways of working through our work
* showing how we’re working and making decisions in line with Act through our reporting, case studies and impact assessments as summarised in our Annual impact report
* working with people on the development of our new strategic plan where we’ll be setting out our wellbeing objectives that we’ll be using to report against in line with the requirements of the Act.

**Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023**

The Act is about working together to improve public service delivery and well-being in Wales through social partnership working, promoting fair work and socially responsible public procurement. There are 4 principles of the Act:

1. **Social Partnership:** Working to achieve a mutually agreed goal, to the benefit of all involved groups.
2. **Socially Responsible Procurement:** Taking action when purchasing goods, works and services, to improve economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being.
3. **Fair Work:** A wide range of potential activities undertaken by employers in agreement with the workforce, which contribute to well-being and improved public service delivery.
4. **Sustainable Development:** Doing things now in a way that considers the impact on people living their lives in Wales in the future.

Below we have given examples of how our work in 2025/27 with the social care and early years sector shows how we’re working in line with the Act:

* For the social care sector we will continue to be active members of the Welsh Government’s [Social Care Fair Work Forum](https://www.gov.wales/social-care-fair-work-forum)
* We will work alongside the sector to lead coordination of the development of a pay and progression framework to be in place by early 2026.

**How we work**

We will be responsible for working in line with the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023. We’ll be taking forward actions set out in our action plan to support the implementation of the Act. This includes:

* promoting Fair Work in our policies for our workforce
* making sure our procurement is socially responsible
* strengthening collaboration with our social partners
* providing training and awareness to our workforce and leaders on the Act and what it means for us

**Iaith Gymraeg**

We’re working across Wales to embed the Welsh language in health and social care and early years and childcare, so that individuals can access the care that they need. Our work with the social care and early years sector is part of the Welsh Government’s [More than just words: Welsh language plan in health and social care](https://www.gov.wales/more-just-words-welsh-language-plan-health-and-social-care) and the Cymraeg 2050 strategy.

For 2025/27 we will continue to promote the use of the Welsh language within the health and social care and early years and childcare sectors through:

* continuing to develop and promote the Camau Welsh language courses specifically designed for the social care sector.
* develop and promote Welsh learning pathways for social care and early years and childcare
* promote the importance of the Welsh language in the social care and early years and childcare sector through events, resources and e learning

More detail on this work can be found <https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/using-welsh-at-work>

**How we work**

We have a Strategaeth iaith which sets out how we will work within the organisation. The aim of our Strategaeth iaith is to not only comply with the legislative requirement to provide a Welsh language service, but also to offer language choice on a routine basis to all those who contact Social Care Wales.

Our commitment to a work environment where neither Welsh or English is treated more favourably than the other is not driven by the standards but by the culture, value and leadership in our organisation shown by all staff at all levels. We aspire to provide an environment which nurtures and develops staff to learn and improve their Welsh language skills. In 2025/27 we will continue to:

* make sure language choice is available in our service delivery for people and within our internal processes for staff
* develop our services which respects the Welsh language and culture so that Welsh speakers use their Welsh language when they are dealing with us
* innovate and create initiatives to promote Welsh language as well as support those developed by the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner to promote, encourage and support more use of Welsh at work

We will report on our annual assurance against the Welsh Language Standards that we have a responsibility and commitment to meet.

More information on how we work can be found <https://socialcare.wales/about-us/what-we-do>

**Equality, Diversity and inclusion**

We’re committed to being an anti-discrimination organisation, working actively to tackle bias and barriers for those with protected characteristics. This includes supporting and implementing several Welsh Government equality plans.

We’re actively working towards creating an anti-racist environment through various initiatives. We’ve a strong commitment to equality and aim to create a more inclusive and equitable society in Wales.

In the Programme for Government, the Welsh Government have committed to celebrate diversity and move to eliminate inequality in all its forms. This strongly aligns to our organisational values and our own strategic ambitions set out in our [Strategic Equality Plan](https://socialcare.wales/cms-assets/documents/strategic-equality-plan.pdf). We’re a proud partner in delivering both the ethos as well as the specified actions in the following action plans:

* [The Anti Racist Wales Action Plan](https://www.gov.wales/anti-racist-wales-action-plan) (published 2022)
* [The LGBTQ+ Action Plan](https://www.gov.wales/lgbtq-action-plan-wales) (published 2023)
* [The HIV Action Plan](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-03/hiv-action-plan-for-wales-2023-to-2026.pdf#:~:text=The%20group%20has%20worked%20collaboratively%20across%20a%20number,achieving%20zero%20tolerance%20of%20HIV-related%20stigma%20by%202030.)  (published 2023)

In 2025/27 we will:

* support and promote events as a clear ally and advocate for an anti-discriminatory Wales
* supporting diversity in leadership by piloting a programme to support people working in social care from an ethnic minority background into management and leadership roles
* increase awareness of our [on-line wellbeing resources](https://socialcare.wales/resources-guidance/health-and-well-being-resources) and run and evaluate at least 4 information and awareness sessions a year that support the wellbeing of people working in the sector
* Establish and pilot an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion expert reference group in 2025/26

**How we work**

We will work to make sure equity, accessibility and inclusion is central to how we work. For our staff this means that we will be:

* promoting opportunities to help us recruit a more diverse workforce at Board, panel members and staff levels
* implement a training programme for Equality Impact Assessments
* deliver relevant Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training and awareness for our workforce
* develop principles to support the development of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategic plan in 2026/27

More information on the detail of how we work can be found here: <https://socialcare.wales/about-us/what-we-do>

**Information Governance**

As part of our improvement work we have a range of data-related projects. We want a joined-up health and social care data landscape that provides useful and consistent data to key organisations in health and care. We want to continue looking at ways we can collectively improve how we use social care data in Wales, including how that data is shared.

Since 2020, we’ve worked with the [National Data Resource](https://dhcw.nhs.wales/national-data-resource/) (NDR) programme on a variety of projects, including on information governance. In 2025/27, subject to confirmation of additional funding, we will be:

* as part of the National Data Resource programme, support social care providers with compliance in data protection guidelines by using a digital solution for information governance documentation
* play our part in supporting the implementation of the Connecting Care system across local authorities in Wales

More information on this work can be found: [Social care data maturity | Social Care Wales](https://socialcare.wales/research-and-data/data-maturity-assessment-2023)

**How we work**

We have a responsibility to make sure that we have the right standards and ways of working to support how we manage the information resource and products (data, information and knowledge) that we have to do our work. We take seriously our responsibility to comply with relevant information governance legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018.

To build on how we work, we will, in 2025/27

* Information governance is part of our organisational learning and development programme
* maintain external accreditations with ISO27001 on information security and Cyber Essentials Plus
* take forward actions, recommendations and learning from Information Governance incidents and audits
* take forward actions to make sure we’re working in line with changes to Data Protection legislation
* look at how we can safely and effectively use Artificial Intelligence further in how we work

**Our 2030 net zero contribution**

We’ve developed our 2030 net zero carbon action plan to identify how we can minimise our carbon footprint.  We will seek to support Welsh Government to realise its ‘Social care decarbonisation route map towards net zero by 2030’ where opportunities are jointly identified with strategic partners.

We will:

* continue to report our carbon footprint and work to assess our impact and areas for future carbon reductions in support of achieving our carbon reduction plan, with a focus upon our digital activities.

**How we work**

We will continue to:

* make sure at Board and senior leadership we’re prioritising consideration of the impact of our activities on the environment
* implement year 3 of our Environmental, sustainability and governance in procurement strategy
* explore further the environmental policies of our suppliers within our procurement activities, seeking to build upon the principles of the circular economy carbon footprint associated with our digital services
* report and evidence our work on the Section 6 duty set out in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 in our Statutory Annual Accounts

More information on our work in this area can be found: <https://socialcare.wales/about-us/our-outcomes/our-commitment-to-becoming-carbon-net-zero-by-2030>

**Our values – how we work**

We will continue to work in line with our values in how we do our work in 25/27.

**Respect everyone:** we see people as individuals and treat everyone with dignity and

Respect. We will:

* respect your views
* be flexible about how we meet your needs
* value each other’s skills and contributions
* give and receive effective feedback
* help and support others
* speak up when we see unacceptable behaviour

**Professional Approach:** we act responsibly and appropriately and hold each other to account. We will:

* be accountable for our own behaviour
* hold others to account
* keep promises
* be positive, a role model and inspirational to others
* use evidence to support decisions

**Always learning:** we improve ourselves and others every day to be the best we can be. This means we

* take responsibility for our own learning and development
* always look to improve our knowledge and skills
* acknowledge when things go wrong
* learn from our mistakes
* try new things
* find solutions to problems

**Involve people:** we involve people in ways that encourage and enable everyone to take part and work together. We will:

* listen carefully to what is being said
* give you a chance to explain your ideas properly.
* be open, honest and clear; speak in a language which you understand
* let you know what’s happening now and next

You can find out more about how we work in line with our values here: <https://socialcare.wales/about-us/what-we-do>

**User centred design – engagement levels**

We use an engagement model that helps us define the level of engagement for each audience, for each project or piece of work. Using the model below you will see examples of our work for 2025/27 within each of these areas:

| **Inform** | **Consult** | **Involve** | **Collaborate (Joint action)** | **Empower (Joint decision-making)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| We will keep you informed through clear and accessible information. | We will keep you informed, listen to your concerns, consider your insights and provide feedback on our decisions and how you have informed them. | We will work with you so that your inputs and issues are directly reflected in proposals developed and provide feedback on how your involvement has influenced the outcome | We will work together to agree plans and include stakeholder advice and recommendations in the outcomes as far as possible | We delegate decision-making to stakeholders on a specific project or issue. We will implement what is decided and support and complement actions. |
| **In 25/27 activities include:** | | | | |
| Websites  Stakeholder bulletins | Workforce survey  Regulation changes | Codes of practice  Continuous Professional Development  Communities of Practice | Workforce delivery plans  Ymlaen strategy |  |

**How we work**

In 2025/27 we will continue to do the actions set out in our digital strategy. This will include developing a playbook to support how we develop and deliver services. The playbook will have [user centred service standards](https://digitalpublicservices.gov.wales/guidance-and-standards/digital-service-standards-wales) at the core of how we will work.

**Key facts and figures**

**Our registered workforce**

Number of people on the Register of Social Care Workers:

As of March 2025 **64,215** people are registered with us:

**1,286** adult care home managers

**26,354** adult care home workers

**1,018** domiciliary care managers

**22,650** domiciliary care workers

**6,825** Social Workers

**712** Social Work students

**426** residential child care managers

**4,836** residential child care workers

**111** other registered group

More data on the workforce can be found here: <https://socialcare.wales/research-and-data/workforce-reports>

**Public perception of social care and early years and childcare in Wales**

In January 2025, 1,000 people across Wales were asked their perception about social care and early years and childcare, as part of the Wales Omnibus Survey. Here’s a snapshot of the results:

* **73%** have confidence in those who work in care
* **86%** of people know what an acceptable standard of care would be like
* **84%** of people who know what an acceptable standard of childcare is
* **32%** of people who would know how to report a social care worker who is suspected of not working to the standards expected of them

**Pay and benefits**

* **74%** think people working in social care should receive similar pay and benefits to those working in the NHS. Of those:
* **35%** said it’s because social care workers do similar work or work that’s just as important
* **13%** said it’s because they work hard, just as hard or long hours
* **11%** said it’s because they care for people

**Regulation**

* **55%** think social care workers and social workers in Wales are regulated
* **66%** think early years and childcare workers are regulated in Wales

**Welsh language**

* **73%** agree people should be able to receive care and support in Welsh if that’s what they choose

**Workforce survey**

We carried out a survey of the registered workforce between January and February 2024. We received **5,024** completed responses to the survey from a variety of roles. In October 2024 we published the results where you’ll be able to find:

* a summary of the main overall findings:
* results split into three groups based on roles – care workers, social workers and social care managers
* full reports

You can find more detail on the findings here ['Have Your Say' workforce survey 2024: Full report and summary of findings - Social Care Wales - Research, Data & Innovation](https://insightcollective.socialcare.wales/reports/have-your-say-workforce-survey-2024-full-report-and-summary-of-findings)

**Sector context: Social care**

Social care employs more than 80,000 people in Wales. This workforce provides support to children and adults across Wales. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to meet people’s care needs. Around 80% of provision is commissioned to the voluntary and private sectors.

A screenshot of a white and green page

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A screenshot of a website

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A close-up of a number of people

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A close-up of a financial challenge

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

**Budget Strategy 2025-2028**

**Introduction**

The budget strategy builds upon developments made in previous financial years. The Business plan this year has set out activities over the two-year April 2025 to March 2027. The Budget plan reflects this move to a longer-term activity planning horizon, making sure that resources to support activity are fully considered within the overall 3-year budget planning. This provides for consideration of:

* medium term viability and sustainability of programmes and activities
* managing the immediate issues we face
* risks and opportunities that may affect our resources
* 5-year Strategic Plan 2022 to 2027 and remit letter priorities
* Business Plan planning principles and parameters approved by Board at the February meeting, reproduced and updated in this paper.
* effective cash management to maintain balances within 2% of total income at 31 March each year

**Public Sector Funding Outlook**

Our indicative core Grant in Aid was announced within the Welsh Government Draft Budget in December 2024. It included increases in resource levels of:

* 1.8% growth in resources for cost pressures
* 0.64% to meet, in full, the ongoing costs to meet the increased public sector pay settlement awarded in 2024-25
* 85% of the funding will be provided to meet increased employer National Insurance costs from April 2025, however this has not been confirmed for after this budget year.

Welsh Government funded ring fenced budgets have been standstill excepting our Innovation Programme which has experienced a reduction of 22% or £300,000 compared to 2024-25. This is reviewed annually based on evidence of need. Programmes supported from ring fenced funds have been reassessed to ensure they can be funded.

The settlement is a commitment for a single year only. There are currently no financial planning parameters beyond the coming year.

The UK Government has announced the outcomes of their Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in the Chancellor’s Spring Statement on the 26 March 2025. For budget planning purposes income levels in future years have been assumed to remain at the 2025-26 levels indicated by Welsh Government.

Following the CSR the UK Government is expected to re-introduce 3-year indicative budgets for Government funded programmes and organisations. It is unclear how this will be reflected in Wales currently, as Senedd elections are due to take place in May 2026.

**Detailed Budget Parameters**

The Board considered and approved the budget parameters used to determine the basis for recognising projected income and costs within the budget strategy at the February Board meeting. These parameters are reproduced below.

**Income**

**Core Grant in Aid**

The 3-year budget strategy is based on the final Welsh Government Budget published 20 February 2025. The Remit Letter has now been received. The 3-year budget strategy assumes that this level of GIA is maintained across the period of this plan.

**Ring Fenced Grant in Aid**

These funding streams are ring fenced to specific expenditure programmes. Funding levels have been confirmed in the Remit Letter for 2025-26 only. The 3-year budget strategy assumes that this level of GIA is maintained across the period of this plan, being matched to budgeted programme costs. The exception to this is funding for the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP) programme which remains outstanding.

**Registration fee income**

Registration fee income covers approximately 41% of the cost of maintaining the Registration and services. The 3-year budget strategy assumes:

1. No increase in Registration Fees
2. An increase in Registrant numbers based on previous years activity level increases

Our Sponsor Team has indicated that Welsh Government do not support an increase in fees currently. However other UK Regulators are updating fees / or are out to consultation on fee rates so we will keep this under review during 2025-26 and consider whether approval to increase fees from 2026-27 should be sought.

**Establishment Costs**  
The Budget Strategy is based upon the following assumptions with regards to employee costs:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Assumption** | **2024-25** | **2025-26** | **2026-27** | **2027-28** |
| Annual Pay Award | 5% | 3% | 3% | 3% |
| Vacancy Factor | 2.7% | 2.7% | 2.7% | 2.7% |
| Employer Pension Rate | 23.5% | 20.4% | 17.3%\* | 14.2%\* |
| Employer NI Rate | 13.8% | 15.0% | 15.0% | 15.0% |
| Employer NI Earnings Threshold | £9,100 | £5,000 | £5,000 | £5,000 |

* **Cost of living pay awards**: across the plan must be internally funded. Current assumptions on pay awards in line with Welsh Government planning assumptions of 3% cost of living awards.
* **Increased Employer National Insurance Costs**: These will be met at 85% of the cost by additional core Grant in Aid income which has been confirmed for 2025/26 but we’ll await confirmation on future years. The changes are:
* an uplift of 1.2% to 15% on relevant earnings
* a reduction in lower earnings threshold is due to come into force from 1 April 2025, which is a £615 per employee.
* **Employer pension contribution rates:** The confirmed Employer pension contribution rate for 2025/26 is 20.4%. This is the last year of a three-year reducing contribution level agreed with the pension fund administrators following a review of our membership status.

Our pension fund is currently £20 million in surplus. The actuary has provided projected reductions in future contribution rates which the fund administrators have confirmed that we may use business planning purposes ahead of their confirmation at the next triennial revaluation and formal revision of contribution rates.

* **Incremental Drift and Job Evaluation:** provision has been made forprojectedincremental enhancements**.**
* **Maternity Cover:** has been included to provide for backfilling of roles where known, with a provision made for future years.

**Expenditure Programmes (see appendix 1)**

Our expenditure plans reflect Business Plan activities described. They comprise:

* business as usual ongoing activities budgets have been reviewed, using a zero-based approach and reflecting upon projected 2024-25 financial performance
* as part of the above review a decision has been made that non pay budgets will not be uplifted for inflation, in favour of funding specific known cost increases
* identified unavoidable cost pressures have been included within the budget
* reduced accommodation costs following changes to office spaces
* Registration Transformation savings from April 2026 have been phased to reduce risk
* rolled forward commitments for deferred Welsh government ring fenced activities funded in 2024-25 have been identified for Pay and reward, Early Years and Child Care. This totals £100,000.

**Supporting Social Work Students**

We aim to provide up to 227 new social worker students in higher education each year through the provision of bursaries and practise learning opportunity funds to support placement costs. In recent years student intake numbers have not reached this level. For budget forecasting purposes the budgets for the 3-year period are based upon **200 new students** entering higher education each year.

Further support is provided for the direct entry ‘Grow Your Own’ scheme through the Regional Facilitation Grant funded scheme. Provisions to increase entry using this route have also been included within the draft budget. Costings are based on an additional cohort of 30 places in Autumn 2025 and are based upon costs identified for a similar additional cohort supported in February 2025.

Ring fenced bursary top up funding provided by Welsh Government (following an increase in bursary rates) is claimed in accordance with student intake numbers. An agreement reached in 2024-25 to provide additional funded ‘Grow Your Own’ places due to lower student numbers for bursaries that year, will also be claimed over the 3 years of the budget plan period.

**Remit Letter**

The Remit Letter was received dates as 18 June 2025 and the budget reflects this.

**Summary Level Budget 2025-27**

A high-level summary of the 3-year budget is detailed below. This shows that we expect to manage available resources to achieve a balanced out turn in the first 2 years (aligned to business plan activities) of the 3-year period with a small projected deficit in the third year.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Income Sources** | **2025-26 £** | **2026-27 £** | **2027-28 £** |
| **Income** |  |  |  |
| Discretionary GIA | 26,264,412 | 26,051,000 | 26,051,000 |
| Ring Fenced GIA | 3,443,000 | 3,443,000 | 3,443,000 |
| Earned Income | 3,946,657 | 2,776,000 | 2,826,000 |
| Capital GIA | 20,000 | 20,000 | 20,000 |
| **Total Income** | **33,674,069** | **32,290,000** | **32,340,000** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity Area** | **2025-26**  **£** | **2026-27**  **£** | **2027-28**  **£** |
| Grants- Bursaries/PLOF | 4,679,342 | 5,159,529 | 5,362,500 |
| Grants -SCWWDP/RFG/SfCS | 8,537,051 | 8,542,551 | 8,542,551 |
| Regulation | 7,446,864 | 6,899,914 | 6,611,471 |
| Other Activities | 5,139,625 | 5,087,026 | 4,820,881 |
| Other Activities Ring Fenced | 3,286,657 | 2,116,000 | 2,116,000 |
| Governance and Business Support | 5,117,746 | 5,078,579 | 5,053,771 |
| Capital Expenditure | 20,000 | 20,000 | 20,000 |
| **Total Expenditure** | **34,227,284** | **32,903,599** | **32,527,174** |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Control Totals** | **2025-26 £** | **2026-27 £** | **2026-27 £** |
| Surplus/ (Deficit) | (553,215) | (613,599) | (187,174) |
| Cash Flexibilities | 553,215 | 613,599 | 187,174 |
| **Projected Out turn** | **-** | **-** | **-** |

**Activity based costing and performance reporting**

The Budget Strategy for 2024 introduced activity-based costing, for direct costs creating greater transparency over staff deployment and non-pay costs. This is supporting deliberations of a ‘stop, start, continue’ basis to achieve our organisation outcomes in a sustainable manner. The March budget provided an assessment of resource deployment.

The Business Planning process is driving the development of activity dashboards. This year’s Business Plan will see a further development of our performance reporting enabling better understanding of the ‘return on investment’ in the context of the sector challenges we are facing.

**Cash Management Flexibilities**

The 3-year budget strategy available for 2024/25 has been calculated on the basis of our cash flexibilities management strategy. This enables in year budgeted expenditure to differ from available in year cash-based income, provided we have sufficient cash balances to manage the overall cash requirement. This strategy is based upon:

* a Welsh Government permitted 2% cash resource carry forward based on GIA
* assumptions that we will continue to use our cash flexibilities in future years, under the Government Financial Reporting arrangements

Cash management flexibilities are a key element of the budget strategy, enabling us to:

* manage commitments across financial years providing greater efficiency in programme delivery, when there is uncertainty over confirmed income
* support recruitment and retention by providing greater job security for our staff
* support invest to save initiatives to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness with increasingly limited resources

**Sensitivity and scenario planning**

As part of ensuring a robust budget strategy a risks and opportunities analysis has been undertaken by the Executive Management Team. This work provides a framework for timely, in year strategic management of the budget to support both minimisation of issues and maximisation of in year opportunities.

1. [Chief Inspector's Annual Report 2023-2024](https://www.careinspectorate.wales/sites/default/files/2024-11/241021-CI-Report-23-24-en.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The workforce survey data relates to the social care and social work workforce and does not cover the early years and childcare sector. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Of the 100% of people who completed the Omnibus survey their ‘exposure to social care’ was as follows– includes working in social care (84%); volunteer in social care (86%); Used to work in social care (73%); Receives social care (81%); Caring for someone; knows someone who receives social care (77%) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Metric to be discussed at the first Regulation and Standards Committee of the financial year. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [Social services national outcomes framework: annual report 2023](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-09/social-services-national-outcomes-framework-annual-report-2023.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)