



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



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

Our Business Plan 2025/27



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Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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Welsh Government

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](#), the Welsh Government's [A Healthier Wales Plan for Health and Social Care](#) and the [Children and Young People's 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](#), 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. As at the end of March 2025 there are just over 64,000 social care workers on our social care Register

(<https://www.scwonline.wales/en/searchtheregister/>) 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](#).

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. 84% in adult social care, 78% in children's services, and 80% in childcare and play services were rated as 'excellent' or 'good' in Care Inspectorate Wales 2024/25 Annual Report. 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, supporting professionals to deliver evidence informed practice that enables people using care and support to live the lives that matter to them.

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.

In 2025 we submitted a 2 year Business Plan. This has been updated for 2026 which 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](#).

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 2026/27. Our Remit Letter is set by the Minister for Children and Social Care, Dawn Bowden MS. We 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 revised Remit Letter.

Any changes in 2026 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 us the three key areas of priority are delivering and focusing on:

- the Workforce strategy through the implementation of the social care workforce delivery plan and workforce planning (Remit Letter)
- implementing the Registration Transformation Programme, to improve user experience and the efficiency of our digital registration system (Remit Letter)
- working in partnership to deliver the priorities for service innovation, improvement and research as set out in Ymlaen (Remit Letter)

More information and detail on the context and specific areas of our work can be found on www.socialcare.wales. This also includes information on our Board 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 set out in our 5 year Strategic Plan. We have started working with people on developing a new strategic plan. You can find more information on these developments on our website: [Help us shape our next strategic plan | Social Care Wales](#)

You'll find out more about what actions we will be taking, about our budget and how progress on our Business Plan will be measured in the following sections.

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](#).

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. Working with national organisations, employers and stakeholders is central to this work. To deliver the best outcomes for people who lead, develop and provide social care, we rely on strong, consistent and purposeful collaboration with partners across Wales. We use the following long-term strategic plan indicators to consider if our, and external partners work, is supporting positive change:

Workforce Survey ¹	2023/24 (Baseline)	2024/25	2025/26	2025-27 trend ambition
% workforce feel supported by colleagues	78%	79%	81%	Maintain
% supported by managers	76%	70%	73%	Increase
% workforce stating that their morale was good	65%	77%	83%	Increase
% workforce stating they struggled to switch off when they leave work	63%	57%	54%	Decrease
% workforce suggested they had enough support to deal with stress	31%	41%	44%	Increase
% workforce suggested they attended work at least twice in the past year despite being ill	-	52%	46%	Decrease

We will:

(Remit Letter) Develop initiatives to support and improve the wellbeing of the workforce such as

- increasing awareness of our [on-line wellbeing resources](#)
- continue to develop and improve the [Health and Wellbeing Framework](#) and supporting resources

¹ The workforce survey data relates to the social care and social work workforce and does not cover the early years and childcare sector.

- run and evaluate at least 3 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
- Identify and test or share new and innovative approaches to support the well-being of the workforce

(Remit Letter) 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 and publish a Workforce Strategy Delivery Plan for 2027–2030, informed by research, data, and engagement with stakeholders across Wales by March 2027
- publish a mid year and an annual report on the progress of the workforce strategy delivery plan
- convene the Social Care Workforce Delivery Plan Strategic Implementation Group on a quarterly basis
- publish the 2025/26 annual report outlining progress made against the Workforce Strategy associated workforce development plans

(Remit Letter) 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. 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 Survey²	2022/23	2024/25	2025/26	2025-27 trend ambition
% of people with a higher opinion of people working in social care than they did three years ago	22%	32%	32%	Monitor
% of people with a higher opinion of people working in early years than they did three years ago	-	24%	24%	Monitor
% of people think people working in social care should receive similar pay and benefits to people working in the NHS	78%	-	74%	Monitor
Workforce Survey	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2025-7 trend ambition
% of the workforce feel valued by the people they support	76%	80%	81%	Increase
% of the workforce who feel valued by the public	44%	51%	50%	Increase
% of the workforce happy with their terms and conditions	60%	68%	69%	Increase
% of the workforce dissatisfied with their pay	57%	46%	42%	Decrease
% of the workforce satisfied with their pay	27%	35%	38%	Increase

We will:

(Remit Letter) 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

² 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%)

- 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

(Remit Letter) Share good practice with others and champion the work of the social care and early years sector, including

- plan, deliver and evaluate the 2026 Accolades (and maintain a 90% evaluation score), sharing the good practice of the finalists and thoroughly review our approach to future awards
- continue to promote the Welsh language through the annual Caring in Welsh Award, increasing the numbers of nominees and people voting
- our work set out in our strengths-based practice and innovation outcomes on pages 23 - 26

(Remit Letter) Developing a service to support employers which means

- agree and work to a revised employer support strategy and associated action plan
- 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
- convene and evaluate learning events annually for the Responsible Individuals' community

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 progression framework is published by March 2026.
- supporting the sector's preparations for the Fair Pay Agreements in social care, following the UK Employment Right's Bill.

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	2024	2025-7 trend ambition
% of vacancies as a proportion of the sector	9%	6%	6%	Maintain
% of employers reporting challenges in availability of staff	-	71%	-	Reduce
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	2025/26	
% started working in social care because they wanted a job that would make a difference to people's lives	63%	69%	50%	Context data
% found out about working in social care through friends and family working in the sector	48%	48%	49%	Context data
% aiming to leave the sector	26%	25%	20%	Decrease

We will:

(Remit Letter) Raise awareness of social care and early years and play roles through national campaigns

- run an always on campaign for WeCare Wales to promote social care, childcare, play and early years

- increase people viewing the [WeCare Wales](#) website and using the resources
- increase the number of jobs advertised and the number of people connecting the adverts through to the on-line jobs portal to show how this site is supporting positive change
- through the work of the Regional Care Career Connector ensure local, regional and national work is fully aligned

(Remit Letter) Develop and provide learning resources and training programmes to support people into the social care and early years workforce including

- continue to effectively deliver pre-employment social care programmes, including support for local delivery and development
- increase the annual number of individuals completing the Introduction to Childcare programmes
- continue to develop and deliver support for existing and future social care workers, including pre-employment support.
- support the development and shaping of the national social care academies locally and the Welsh Government's ambition for a national approach to this support.

(Remit Letter) Develop a framework that supports organisations to improve retention through

- 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 by March 2027
- develop additional resources, tools and guidance that serves to fill the gaps identified to complete the framework

(Remit Letter) Provide financial support to social work students to support them in their studies via funding pathways such as

- provide eligible students with a bursary to help them with the costs of their studies
- provide support and advice to all bursary students
- provide a financial allowance for eligible social work students undertaking Practice Learning Opportunities (PLOs), including support for placement related costs.
- provide funding to local authorities to plan, coordinate and deliver high quality Practice Learning Opportunities for social work students.

- provide financial support for course providers to ensure meaningful involvement of people with lived experience and carers in the design, delivery and assessment of qualifying social work programmes.

(Remit Letter) Give a national grant which provides training and development opportunities for people employed in social care (SCWWDP) which includes

- issuing a national grant that meet the annual circular requirements and cover all local authority areas and wider sector in Wales
- production of an annual report to monitor the grant that synthesise, summarise and curate data and evidence

(Remit Letter) Building and nurturing excellent Social Work professional practice such as

- support the retention of social workers through the development of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and career pathway webpages scheduled for launch in Autumn 2026.
- review current arrangements for social workers in their first three years of practice, incorporating learning from the review of social work education, and agree a proposed way forward by April 2027.
- refresh the Social Work Workforce Development Plan for launch in Autumn 2026/27.
- develop and publish mentor guidance, to be launched alongside the Social Work Workforce Plan.
- plan and deliver Social Work Week annually.
- convene and manage the Social Work Futures Network.
- review, plan and update the Social Work Profession Stakeholder Group.

(Remit Letter) Support improvement in workforce planning for social services across Wales, including

- report on the findings of the scoping exercise to develop action plans to support the advancement of workforce planning in all Local Authorities (RL Develop and deliver a programme of support that enables social care providers to develop robust workforce plans that enhance recruitment, retention, and workforce wellbeing in the immediate and longer term)
- convene and manage a national social care workforce planning network across Wales

- produce workforce planning resources that can be embedded in induction, leadership development, and workforce planning training.
- develop learning modules tailored to social care workforce planning needs.

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

We will:

(Remit Letter) Maintain the professional workforce Register of social care workers by

- maintaining the register of social care workers, processing all applications within 28 days, with 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.

(Remit Letter) 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.

- 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.
- hold all Regulatory panel hearings in accordance with the Rules
- report and learn from any appeals made to the Care Standards Tribunal
- continue to provide wellbeing support for registered people undergoing our fitness to practise process, as well as those engaged as witnesses or those raising concerns

(Remit Letter) 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, individuals who use care and support services and their carers alike. We will use this opportunity to also raise wider awareness of the regulatory framework for social care workers and the standards to which they must adhere.
- develop, publish and promote practice guidance resources for the sector

(Remit Letter) Review and improve how we regulate which includes, as examples

- achieving all milestones within the Fitness to Practice improvement project plan
- considering a new approach to the supervision and review of panel members
- reviewing our regulatory rules to ensure they reflect legislative developments and practice changes
- completing the audit of all regulatory processes

(Remit Letter) Improve our registration service by

- progressing requirements to support the registration transformation programme so that identified benefits within the programme plan can begin to be realised in 2026/27. This includes:
 - introducing improvements to the pre application process for registering
 - updating guidance on our website on the registration application and renewal process for workers, endorsers and employers
 - developing and launching a new on-line registration application for social care workers
 - beginning work on the changes needed to modernise the application process for social care managers

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	2025/26	2025-27 trend ambition
% of people think residential care workers are always skilled and professional in the work they do	67%	65%	-	Increase
% of people think home care workers are always skilled and professional in the work they do	65%	62%	-	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	2025/26	2025-7 trend ambition
% of the workforce who say they get the right training to do their job well	79%	87%	86%	Maintain
% of the workforce requiring more training to progress their career	47%	47%	47%	Context data
% of the workforce that said they had no issues in accessing work-related training	65%	65%	66%	Increase
% said they could speak at least some Welsh	45%	40%	40%	Increase

We will:

(Remit Letter) Provide assurance on the quality of Social Work programmes in Wales such as

- completing and reporting to the Board, via the Regulation and Standards Committee, on annual monitoring of relevant education programmes. The report will provide information on quality assurance activity for this period as well as any thematic reviews.

- working with the sector on options on social work education models following completion of the external review.

(Remit Letter) Support the development, delivery and implementation of qualifications, continuous learning and frameworks for the social care sector through examples of the following

- provide an annual report on the work programme around qualifications, standards and assessment
- 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
- 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
- plan, deliver and evaluate training and events for social care, including on the All Wales Induction Framework and the Employer Assessment Route

Support the development, delivery and implementation of qualifications, continuous learning and frameworks for the early years sector through examples of the following

- map Early years and childcare HEI L4 into EYPS degrees
- design, develop, deliver and support implementation of Early Years Managers induction
- produce and promote resources to support continuous learning for the early years sector

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

(Remit Letter) Support Welsh language in social care and early years services such as

- showing active leadership and partnership working on supporting the delivery of the strategic commitment set out in Mwy na Geiriau
- continue to offer a targeted employer support offer, working with providers to help them to understand Welsh language needs of their workforce and support workforce planning
- look at how we can roll out the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) within our services to understand the language abilities of the sector.
- support social care workers to use and improve their Welsh language skills through a varied offer of training and support
- promote the importance of the Welsh language in the social care and early years and childcare sector through events and our Welsh language offer and evaluate uptake
- use data where available to understand more about international workers and their Welsh language needs. Engage with employers who hire workers from outside the UK to assess and understand Welsh language training needs.

- 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

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

- continue to support and strengthen the community for Approved Mental Health Professional leads
- 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

(Remit Letter) Design, develop and support implementation of existing and new Safeguarding tools, approaches and resources such as

- continue to promote and monitor uptake of the safeguarding training resources
- work with partners, including the National and Regional Safeguarding Boards where appropriate, including lessons learnt from practice reviews.
- work with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board to assist them in design and delivery of national Section 5 training and the delivery and facilitation of specific Local Authority Designated Officer/ Designated Safeguarding Officer training.

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 and enhance digital Anti Racist e-learning resources and support anti-racist practice in the sector
- promote the Welsh Government's e-learning on modern slavery in the social care sector and early years and childcare sector
- support and promote events as a clear ally and advocate for an anti-discriminatory Wales
- collect data for Workforce 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
- develop our response to the Welsh Government's Disabled People's Right action plan and the neurodiversity code

- promote and support leaders in social care to use the HIV e-learning developed with the Terrence Higgins Trust.

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. 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	2022/23³			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	2025/26	
% wanted a leadership role in the future	36%	47%	43%	Context data
% believed it's possible for them to become a leader	50%	60%	58%	Context data
% sought progression in the past year	-	37%	27%	Context data
% feel supported by colleagues	78%	79%	81%	Maintain
% feel supported by manager	66%	70%	73%	Increase
% feel valued by colleagues	71%	80%	78%	Maintain
% feel valued by manager	61%	70%	68%	Increase

We will:

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

³ [Social services national outcomes framework: annual report 2024 \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

- 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
- continue to support a compassionate leadership community/network to learn and build on how we connect to practice and continue to provide support
- supporting diversity in leadership by piloting and evaluating a programme to support people working in social care from an ethnic minority background into management and leadership roles

(Remit Letter) 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 including coaching support for providers
- continue to work with, six social care providers to participate in testing and evaluation of potential approaches
- produce resources to support the implementation of the 'test and learn' pilot projects

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 workshops and training for the social care workforce to work in strength based ways
- promotion and awareness of our strength based practice resources, including our webpages and e-learning modules

(Remit Letter) Support the Transformation of Children's Services through work such as

- develop a workforce development plan for residential children's care
- through targeted WeCare Wales campaigns (delivered in February each year to align with National Child in Care Day), promote and support recruitment and retention of the residential children's care workforce
- update 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 alongside relevant learning events to support the sector

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

Our Ymlaen 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 strategy and, critically, work with partners to deliver it. 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 will continue to strengthen our innovation support, including through our active engagement with the DiSC (Digital in Social Care) framework, led by the WLGA. 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	2025/26	
% wanted a leadership role in the future	36%	47%	43%	Context data
% believed it's possible for them to become a leader	50%	60%	58%	Context data
% sought progression in the past year	-	37%	27%	Context data
% feel supported by colleagues	78%	79%	81%	Maintain
% feel supported by manager	66%	70%	73%	Increase
% feel valued by colleagues	71%	80%	78%	Maintain
% feel valued by manager	61%	70%	68%	Increase

We will:

(Remit Letter) 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:
 - ⊖ continue to develop our reflective approach to Ymlaen governance

- develop an implementation plan with partners for 2026/2027
- 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
- work with partners to set priorities for research, innovation and improvement in social care
- explore different ways we can work with local authorities and providers to improve the impact of our research, innovation and improvement services

(Remit Letter) 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 2026/27

(Remit Letter) Building skills and mobilising knowledge to improve practice using evidence

- convene and evaluate learning events annually for the Evidence Community of Practice
- take forward agreed recommendations on our offer of support for people developing communities of practice
- 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.

(Remit Letter) 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
- 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

(Remit Letter) 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
- work with partners on the implementation of findings from 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

- continue to promote the digital literacy and maturity assessment tool for people working in social care to self-assess and identify learning needs, and begin the process of updating the tool
- explore opportunities with WLGA and other partners to develop support for digital approaches to implement the DiSC (Digital in Social Care) Framework
- 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 innovative 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
- support social care innovation by building innovation capability through innovation coaching, support and advice
- continue to work with 2 Local Authorities to test and learn how we deliver and communicate our offer of support around improvement and development

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

We will:

(Remit Letter) Work and measure our impact in line with legislation and governance framework

- publish annual reports on how we're managing our resources and managing our impact by September (Statutory Annual Accounts) and November (Impact Report) of each year
- 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 and prepare for any future compliance requirements (such as Health Impact Assessments)
- take forward actions set out in our action plan to support implementation of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023
- deliver effective management of our Board and Committees
- undertake a discovery review our approach to data governance
- develop further our next strategic plan in line with the principles of the Future Generations Act, supported by engagement and consultation.

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

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 support our staff

- roll out year 2 of our organisational learning and development programme with 90% of plan completion annually
- deliver year 2 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 including our approach to safeguarding within the organisation
- review our People Strategy
- design and implement an improved HR system

Market and communicate to our audiences

- develop a more sophisticated understanding of our audiences and how we can join up our brands, products and services in a way that makes sense to our audiences
- develop and implement marketing and communication plans to improve the reach and take-up of our services and support with workforce, providers and local authorities
- continuously improve our main website to improve the user experience and make it easier for people to find the content they're looking for.

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 Plus and ISO27001 accreditations

(Remit Letter) Develop and implement an anti-discriminatory and equitable organisational approach

- continue to facilitate an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion expert reference group
- implement a training programme for digital Equality Impact Assessments
- deliver relevant Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training and awareness for our Social Care Wales workforce
- engage with the public, the social care workforce and key stakeholders to support the development and launch of our 2027-2031 Strategic Equality Plan.
- embed our commitments as a Corporate Parent

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](#).

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, strategic mental health workforce plan for health and social care](#), and the [social work workforce plan](#), 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](#), 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](#) 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](#) 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](#)
- We will work alongside the sector to lead coordination of the development of a pay and progression framework to be in place by March 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](#) 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 Welsh Language Strategy/Strategaeth iaith which sets out how we will work within the organisation. The aim of our Welsh Language Strategy/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 targeted work, created in coproduction with people with lived experience. We've a strong commitment to equality and aim to create a more inclusive and equitable society in Wales.

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](#). 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](#) (published 2022)
- [The LGBTQ+ Action Plan](#) (published 2023)
- [The HIV Action Plan](#) (published 2023)
- [The Disability Rights Action Plan](#) (published 2025)
- The Neurodiversity code (to be published in 2026)

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](#) 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 facilitate an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion expert reference group in 2025/26 and 2026/27.

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 and launch our Strategic Equality plan for 2027-2031

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](#) (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](#)

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 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](#) 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> and here [National Social Care Data Portal For Wales](#)

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 2025. We received **5,707** completed responses to the survey from a variety of roles. In November 2025 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](#)

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 changing population

The number of people aged 65 years or older in Wales will increase by **19.6%** to **806,000** between 2022 and 2032, and to **more than 1 million** by 2060

The number of people aged 75 years or older will increase by **22.1%** from 2022 to 2032 to around **391,300 people**

Satisfaction among people using care and support

In 2022 to 2023, **77%** of people receiving care and support said the support they received helped them have a better quality of life

80% of those receiving care and support rated it as 'excellent' or 'good'

Pay and conditions

Just **35%** of the social care workforce are satisfied with their pay, and **only 42%** say they're 'living comfortably' or 'doing alright' financially

Only 31% of social care workers have access to sick pay beyond the statutory level

Workforce diversity

More than 1 in 5 workers are from Black, Asian and mixed or other ethnic minority backgrounds. But these groups only account for **1 in 15** workers at managerial level

Ethnic minority staff are **more than twice as likely** as their White counterparts to report a lack of training to progress their careers

Financial challenges

"Local government is financially unsustainable over the medium term unless action is taken," says Audit Wales

Its 2024 report found a **94%**, **27%** and **31%** real term growth in spending on children's, adults and older people's social care between 2008 to 2009 and 2023 to 2024

Early years and childcare

The early years and childcare workforce in Wales isn't currently registered, so we don't have the same level of data for this workforce. According to Care Inspectorate Wales's 2023 Self-Assessment of Service Statement, **more than 16,000 people** work in childcare and play.

Demographics

- **96%** are female, **3%** are male
- **57%** are aged between 36 and 55 years old
- **98%** are White
- **54%** are either fluent or speak some Welsh

Data taken from Welsh Government's *Mapping the Childcare and Play Workforce: Phase 2 report*

Settings

According to StatsWales, in 2023 to 2024:

- there were **3,336** children's daycare settings in Wales – **down 2.9%** from 2022 to 2023
- there were **79,523** places in children's daycare settings – **up 0.4%** from 2022 to 2023
- **41,328** children received Flying Start services – **7.3% higher** than expected.

A changing population

Due to falling birth rates, the number of children and young people aged 0 to 15 years old is set to **decrease by 10.2%** from 2022 to 2032

Around 29% of children in Wales were living in poverty in 2023. New research suggests this could rise to **34%** by the end of the decade

Financial challenges

"Local government is financially unsustainable over the medium term unless action is taken,"
says Audit Wales

Its 2024 report found a **94%** real term growth in spending on children's social care over the past 15 years. The number of children looked after by local authorities increased by **79%** between 2003 and 2023

Budget Strategy 2025-2028

Introduction

We are currently in the second year of the three-year budget strategy and the second year of the current business planning cycle. The business plan sets out planned activity for the two-year period from April 2025 to March 2027, aligned to the organisation's strategic objectives and statutory responsibilities. In 2026 we will be engaging and consulting on our next strategic plan, which will be underpinned by a long term financial plan.

There is a continued commitment to longer term planning of both activity and resources. This approach supports improved alignment between strategic priorities and financial capacity, enabling the organisation to plan with greater confidence and make more effective use of available resources over the medium term.

Working to a longer-term budgeting and planning framework provides several benefits, including:

Improved strategic alignment: Enables clearer alignment between statutory duties, strategic priorities, and planned activity, ensuring resources are directed to areas of greatest organisational need over the medium term.

Greater financial sustainability: Supports early identification of financial pressures and cost drivers, allowing mitigating actions to be planned and managed in a timely and structured way. Including improved cash management to maintain balances within 2% of total income at 31 March each year.

More effective workforce and activity planning: Supports more coherent planning of staffing, programmes, and delivery schedules, reducing reliance on short-term solutions and improving continuity of delivery.

Enhanced value for money: Enables more informed prioritisation of activity over time, supporting decisions about phasing, sequencing, and scaling of work within available resources.

Increased organisational resilience: Provides greater capacity to respond to changes in policy direction, funding assumptions, or operational pressures while continuing to deliver core functions.

Stronger governance and financial oversight: Improves transparency for the Board by providing clearer visibility of future commitments, resource requirements, and financial risks.

Improved confidence among stakeholders: Demonstrates prudent financial management and forward planning to Welsh Government, partners, and the social care sector.

Public Sector Funding Outlook: Welsh Government published its Detailed Draft Budget in November 2025, with the Final Budget approved by the Senedd on 27 January 2026. Our baseline resource grant has been increased to incorporate:

- the 2025/26 employer National Insurance increase; and
- a 3.25% pay uplift, reflecting the salary increase in the 2025/26 budget.

This results in a baseline resource grant of £26,711,000 (2025/26: £26,051,000).

In addition, Welsh Government grant funding of £3,517,000 is anticipated. This funding is currently held within other Welsh Government budget lines and is therefore not separately identifiable at this stage. However, based on discussions with our sponsorship team, we are working on the assumption that this funding will be received.

Detailed Budget Parameters

Income

Core Resource Grant

The budget strategy is based on the final Welsh Government Budget published on 20 January 2026 and also what will be in our Remit Letter for 26/27.

Additional Welsh Government Grant

These funding streams are specifically allocated to programmes of work. Funding levels are yet to be confirmed, as the amounts are agreed annually and sit within wider Welsh Government budget lines rather than being separately identifiable.

The budget strategy assumes that this level of additional grant is maintained across the period of this plan, with funding aligned to the associated programme costs. While additional grant funding had previously been anticipated to support activity linked to the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP), this funding was not received in 2025/6. On this basis, the assumption for 2026/27 is that no specific additional ARWAP grant funding will be made available.

Other grant income

The draft budget includes other grant income to the sum of £839K. This is grant income from HEIW, DHCW and WLGA and relates to specific programmes of work. This funding is yet to be confirmed. So, we have only included income to the sum of total ongoing staff costs. Any additional income awarded will be relating to non-pay costs or new fixed term positions, thereby increasing both income and expenditure by the same value. The risk of not receiving the income is considered very low by the Executive Management Team, hence the inclusion of the staff costs. However, for context the total value of staff costs included for the year is £356K.

Registration fee income

Registration fee income part funds the cost of maintaining the Registration and services. The remainder of the cost is funded from core Welsh Government grant.

The budget strategy assumes:

- No increase in Registration Fees
- An increase in Registrant numbers based on previous years activity level increases

We are currently considering the principles around potential increases to registration fees and are monitoring the approach taken by other UK regulators. However, no increase in registration fees has been assumed within the current budget strategy.

Expenditure Programmes

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 2025/26 financial performance
- salary increases 2026/27: 3.2%, 2027/28: 3%
- assumed staff vacancy factor of 3%
- 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

Supporting Social Work Students

As in 2025/26, We are continuing to work towards 200 new bursary students entering higher education each year.

2026/27 also continue to support the 'Grow Your Own' scheme through the Regional Facilitation Grant funded scheme. Costings are based on an additional cohort of 30 places in Autumn 2026 and are based upon costs identified for a similar additional cohort supported in February 2026.

Additional bursary top up funding provided by Welsh Government (following an increase in bursary rates) is claimed in accordance with student intake numbers

Remit Letter

The Remit Letter has not yet been finalised; however, we have been working collaboratively with Welsh Government to support its development and agreement. And anticipate a final agreed remit letter before the end of March which the figures in the table show below.

Summary Level Budget 2026-28

A high-level summary of the remaining 2 years of the business plan is detailed below. In summary, we are budgeting both income and expenditure at £33.6m, showing that we expect to manage available resources to achieve a balanced budget. The table below is a high-level summary of income expected over the next two years.

Income	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £000
Welsh Government core grant	26,711	26,711
Welsh Government additional grant	3,517	3,517
Other grant	839	784
Registration fees	2,550	2,550
Total income	33,617	33,562

The table below is a high-level summary of expenditure expected over the next two years.

Expenditure	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £000
Grant programmes	13,220	13,220
Staff costs	15,472	15,936
Governance and business support	1,826	1,826
Other costs	3,099	2,580
Total expenditure	33,617	33,562

Cash Management Flexibilities

Our budget strategy is based on managing cash flexibilities and in line with our Model Governance Framework with the Welsh Government and is based upon:

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

Our use of cash management flexibilities are based on the below principles:

- they allow us to have a clear purpose, supporting risk management, financial resilience and planned change
- they manage commitments across financial years providing greater efficiency in programme delivery, when there is uncertainty over confirmed income

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.