



# Our draft equality objectives for 2022 to 2027:

Becoming an anti-discrimination Wales promoting equality, valuing diversity in social care

**Have your say on what our priorities for equality, diversity and inclusion should be**

Consultation closes on 13September 2021



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**Other formats:** This document is available in large text, Braille and other languages, if required. You can request these by using the contact details above. This document is also available in Welsh.

# Overview

We want your views and ideas about our draft equality objectives to help us develop our five-year *Strategic equality plan for 2022 to 2027*.

This consultation is part of Social Care Wales’s commitment to become an organisation that actively seeks to improve the lives of people with protected characteristics by:

* tackling discrimination
* promoting equality and diversity
* creating a more inclusive society.

We recognise our role is to be a leader in these areas in social care and early years, and to work with others in the sector to create real and meaningful change.

We understand that our commitment to oppose discrimination can never be passive. We must be honest and open about where we are, and what we need to do. The objectives set out in this consultation are part of that, but we will need to go further in our work if we are to meet our, and our citizens’, ambitions.

## How to respond

If you’d like to have your say on our proposed equality objectives, you can do so by:

* completing the online survey at [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/G9FQ6VD](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/G9FQ6VD)
* completing this document and emailing it to abubakar.askira@socialcare.wales
* requesting a discussion at one of your regular meetings with us.

The closing date for the consultation is **5pm, 13 September 2021**.

Thank you for taking the time to tell us what you think.

# Our draft equality objectives for 2022 to 2027: consultation

## Foreword by our Chair and Chief Executive

We are developing a new strategic equality plan. This new plan will give us an opportunity to align with, and reflect, the ambitions of our *Strategic plan for 2022 to 2027*, whichwe’re currently developing. It will also give us an opportunity to respond to the current and ongoing inequalities that have been highlighted and made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has shown how crucial the social care and early years workforces are to the well-being of people of all ages in communities across Wales. These workers have met the enormous challenges of the pandemic through their commitment and professionalism. There is now greater recognition by the public that social care and early years workers are key workers – and not just in a time of crisis.

Sadly, the social care workforce has been greatly affected by the pandemic. The social care workforce is among the occupational groups at [highest risk of death from Covid-19, particularly care home workers and domiciliary care workers](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19relateddeathsbyoccupationbeforeandduringlockdownenglandandwales/deathsregisteredbetween9marchand30jun2020#deaths-involving-covid-19-among-male-and-female-health-and-social-care-workers-before-and-during-lockdown). The impact on the physical and mental health of workers has also been brought to the fore, with people having to cope with new and incredibly difficult challenges.

The impact of the pandemic on older and disabled people, ethnic minorities, some women and people living in socio-economic disadvantage is a wakeup call for the public sector and society. We must make sure our work supporting the Covid-19 recovery is informed by:

* up-to-date evidence
* our engagement with others
* the use of equality impact assessments to better understand the impact our decisions may have on different types of people[[1]](#footnote-1).

The pandemic has made us focus our strategic equality plan and equality objectives on tackling the inequalities made worse by Covid-19 and we are committed to putting equality and human rights at the centre of our decision making.

We are committed to being an anti-discrimination organisation – placing equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of our work. Our support for the sector after Covid-19 must recognise the impact it has had on those with protected characteristics.

We also recognise that we can do more in some areas and we will prioritise the areas where we can make the most difference, in line with our remit and responsibilities.

This consultation provides information about the five areas we propose to focus on in our work on equality and diversity going forward. These equality objectives have been informed by a series of engagement events with people who share one or more of the protected characteristics.

We are now asking you to help us make sure they are setting us off in the right direction. Are we focusing on the right things? Are we being bold enough? What will be the results of our work?

We need your feedback to shape our equality priorities, so we can be confident our next five-year strategic equality plan will help remove the disadvantages experienced by people because of a protected characteristic ·

Mick Giannasi, Chair, and Sue Evans, Chief Executive

## Who are we?

We are the lead organisation in Wales for social care workforce regulation, service improvement, research and data, and workforce development.

Our role in early years is on a smaller scale. We are a strategic partner for the Welsh Government, supporting the ongoing development, support and professionalisation of the workforce.

## What do we do?

We:

* **develop the workforce** so they have the knowledge and skills to protect, empower and support those who need help and care
* **work with others to improve services** for areas agreed as a national priority
* **provide information** for the public, the workforce and other organisations
* **share practice** with the workforce so they can provide the best response to meet support needs
* **set priorities for research** to get evidence of what works well
* **set standards** for the care and support workforce, making them accountable for their work.

We support and promote innovation, and share knowledge, practice and experiences across social care in Wales. We work with partners to make sure we can work together to improve outcomes for people and families who use care and support, as well as those who provide it. We will act as a leader, champion and voice for social care and early years, offering constructive challenge and support to professionals and providers.

Our work is underpinned by the principle that adults and children who use care and support, as well as their families and carers, work together to create support that works for them. The approach is values driven and built on the principle that those who use a service are best placed to help design it. We will do this directly in our work where appropriate, but we will also make sure we follow this approach in all our advice about evidence to the sector.

## Our vision

We want to improve outcomes for children and adults who rely on good care and support, as well as their families and carers, so they can live the life that matters to them.

## Our strategic equality plan

We have a statutory duty to publish a strategic equality plan. We will use what we learn from this consultation to develop the plan.

But our ambition is to go beyond the plan and to promote equality and tackle discrimination in all our work. We want to play a leadership role in making sure Wales opposes discrimination, so we will be vigilant, and speak up and challenge discrimination, in whatever form it may take.

## Developing our equality objectives for 2022 to 2027

This consultation sets out our draft equality objectives and the outcomes we hope to achieve in response to the ongoing lessons and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our draft equality objectives have been informed by a number of evidence sources, such as:

* [*Into sharp relief: inequality and the pandemic*](https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld13403/cr-ld13403-e.pdf) – Welsh Parliament Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, August 2020
* [*First Minister’s BAME Covid-19 Advisory Group: Report of the Socioeconomic Subgroup*](https://gov.wales/black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-bame-covid-19-socioeconomic-subgroup-report) – June 2020
* Equality and Human Rights Commission, [*Briefing Paper 1: Rebuilding a more equal and fairer Wales: Focus on the unequal impact of the coronavirus pandemic*](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/parliamentary-briefing-paper-rebuilding-more-equal-fairer-wales-coronavirus-may-2020.pdf) – May 2020
* [the equality profile of the social care workers who are registered with us](https://socialcare.wales/research-and-data/workforce-reports)
* *Coronavirus (COVID-19) related deaths by occupation, England and Wales: deaths registered between 9 March and 28 December 2020* – Office for National Statistics

## Engaging and involving people who use care and support

When we set our equality objectives, it is important we listen and reflect the views of those who share one or more of the protected characteristics. Not only because we have a legal duty to do so, but so we can make sure our work is informed by their views and needs.

Our draft equality objectives have been informed by people who use care and support, their families and carers. With support from Diverse Cymru, we held six engagement events in December 2020 and shared an online questionnaire in which we tested the draft equality objectives.

We received feedback from people who represented a range of the protected characteristics.

We are grateful to those people who helped us develop our equality objectives and all those who took the time to comment on our plans. Many people gave their time freely and willingly, and we would like to acknowledge and thank them for their contribution.

Their feedback has been invaluable in helping us make sure the equality objectives better reflect the priorities and concerns of diverse communities.

We will continue to engage with, and involve, a diverse range of people as we fulfil the commitments we make in our strategic equality plan.

## Our organisational approach

We will promote equality and tackle discrimination in everything we do. We will consider equality and diversity in all our work and expect all our staff to understand the principles of fairness, equality and inclusion, and put them into practice.

We will tackle discrimination on the grounds of:

* [age](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/age-discrimination)
* [disability](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/disability-discrimination)
* [gender reassignment](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/gender-reassignment-discrimination)
* [marriage and civil partnership](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/marriage-and-civil-partnership-discrimination)
* [pregnancy and maternity](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/our-work/managing-pregnancy-and-maternity-workplace)
* [race](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/race-discrimination)
* [religion or belief](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/religion-or-belief-discrimination)
* [sex](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/sex-discrimination)
* [sexual orientation](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/sexual-orientation-discrimination)
* preferred language
* family/domestic responsibilities
* socio-economic status
* any other individual characteristic that may limit a person’s opportunity to achieve what matters to them.

Our Board members will use our five-year strategic equality plan to scrutinise our work and our progress in accomplishing our equality objectives, holding our staff to account. We will share our progress on accomplishing our equality objectives with you on our website, and in our communication and meetings with you.

## Comprehensive strategic approach

To make sure we embed equality, diversity and inclusion across our work we will remove the artificial distinction between our work in this area and our wider activity. The strategic equality plan will become an underlying part of our new corporate strategic plan and we will report to our Board and the Welsh Government on our progress in fulfilling its commitments.

We will make our commitment to promoting equality and tackling discrimination a central objective in our strategic plan.

## Welsh Government leadership

We recognise that the Welsh Government is leading on the promotion of equality and the tackling of discrimination across public services. We are aware of the consultation on a [Race Equality Action Plan](https://gov.wales/race-equality-action-plan-anti-racist-wales), which will be followed by other similar plans for those with protected characteristics.

We fully support and welcome this leadership from the Welsh Government. It sets an ambitious and timely set of markers for us all. We will continue to shape our plans in this area to reflect that leadership and to take forward actions that fall upon us. Our final strategic equality plan will reflect that leadership, as well as our learning from working with those with protected characteristics and this consultation.

We are also aware that the Equality and Human Rights Commission is carrying out an [inquiry into racial inequality](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/inquiries-and-investigations/inquiry-racial-inequality-health-and-social-care-workplaces), looking at the experiences of low-paid ethnic minority workers in the health and social care sectors during the pandemic. We will look to feed this work into our final plan.

Finally, we recognise the groundbreaking leadership of the Welsh Government in the area of socio-economic disadvantage at a time when the coronavirus pandemic has led to increased levels of poverty in Wales and a potential economic downturn. We are committed, through our work around greater equality, diversity and inclusion, to support the aims of the [socio-economic duty](https://gov.wales/socio-economic-duty-overview).

## Our strategic equality plan objectives

The purpose of our strategic equality plan objectives is not to set out everything we will do in this area, but to identify five areas we will focus on over the next five years. They are areas in which we can play a meaningful role as the social care and early years sectors recover from the pandemic. They aim to set out the changes we can help bring about to improve the social care and early years sectors’ success in promoting equality and tackling discrimination.

**The five areas are:**

1. As the lead organisation in Wales for developing social care data and research, we will prioritise the improvement of qualitative and quantitative data, research, evidence, analysis, intelligence and understanding to support and drive continued progress across the sector. We will use our data to better understand the characteristics of the workforce and support the sector to better reflect the population of Wales.
2. As the national body that registers social care workers, we will work with employers and leaders in social care and early years to help them make sure workers have an equal opportunity to reach their full potential.
3. As the use of digital technologies becomes more widespread following the pandemic, we will develop our services and help the social care sector make sure no-one is left behind as working practices change.
4. As we set out in the *Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy*, we will help make sure workers have access to support for their well-being and recognise the additional challenges faced by those with protected characteristics.
5. Finally, as a Welsh Government Sponsored Body, we will set out to become a leader in anti-discrimination, equality, diversity and inclusion through our Board, staff and services.

# Our objectives

## Objective 1: Improve the use of equality data and information

**What do we want to achieve?**

We will improve the data collected about the social care workforce and the way it is used to better understand what the sector can do to achieve a diverse workforce that better reflects the communities it serves.

**Why is this one of our objectives?**

We want a social care workforce that is more representative of the communities it serves, particularly where there is evidence of underrepresentation. We want to work with partners to identify and address the barriers that may prevent people who share one or more of the protected characteristics from joining the social care workforce.

By working with employers to tackle attraction, recruitment and retention issues, and provide them with training, information and resources, we will improve the provision of high-quality care and support for people, children and families.

Our recent [publication about the domiciliary care workforce](https://socialcare.wales/resources/domiciliary-care-workers-on-the-register-1-june-2020) found that 84 per cent are female, 96.5 per cent are white and 3.5 per cent are from an ethnic minority background. Only 10 per cent are fluent in Welsh, while 26 per cent have some Welsh language ability and 64 per cent have no Welsh language skill at all. This needs to change if we are serious about providing meaningful care and support. Providing care and support for someone is a very personal activity, and a common bond of trust, culture and language helps provide the highest quality care.

We must also consider the groups most likely to be affected by the expected rise in poverty because of the Covid-19 pandemic. These include young people, ethnic minorities, and disabled people who are already closest to the poverty line[[2]](#footnote-2).

People who use care and support, their carers and families told us that this draft objective should also focus on making sure people who use a variety of languages and who are from a variety of cultures are supported properly.

## Objective 2: Equality at work

**What do we want to achieve?**

We will work with employers and leaders in social care and early years to help them advance equality of opportunity for the social care and early years workforce.

**Why is this one of our objectives?**

Ethnic minority communities have reported racial inequality in Wales, with some staff in health and social care settings saying they felt they had been treated less favourably than their white colleagues during the coronavirus pandemic[[3]](#footnote-3).

The GMB also reports that workers from an ethnic minority background remain at serious risk at work because of the lack of comprehensive risk assessments carried out during the pandemic.[[4]](#footnote-4) We believe social care workplaces should lead the way in terms of equality and inclusion, giving everyone the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their background, identity or circumstance, so they feel valued and supported at work.

Going above and beyond to support the most vulnerable in our society has been a major feature displayed by the social care and early years workforce during the pandemic. The pandemic has also raised the profile of the workforce, the work they do and their value to society as key workers.

But many of these workers are relatively low paid and in employment that’s often insecure[[5]](#footnote-5). Having guaranteed employment and income are an essential part (among a number of factors) of making sure the social care and early years workforce achieves equal and fair work practices.

We will act as a supportive and critical friend, challenging providers and employers to make sure any actions to address inequality and discrimination in the social care and early years workforce are based on the strongest evidence.

We will support the ambition to have fair reward and recognition across the social care and early years workforce. This will take account of the *Report of the Fair Work Commission* (2019) and *Is Wales Fairer?* (2018).

## Objective 3: Digital inclusion

**What do we want to achieve?**

We will work to make sure equality, accessibility and inclusion are central to our work of building a digitally ready social care and early years workforce in Wales.

**Why is this one of our objectives?**

The world has changed because of the pandemic. One of the biggest changes has been the increasing speed of the move to digital services and virtual communication, which risks worsening unfairness in society.

Social care and early years workers who can’t access or use digital technology may struggle to engage with our increasing digital activity and that of others in the sector, as we begin the work to support the sector’s recovery and sustainability.

We have also seen a quick growth in the use of digital technologies, such as tablet devices, to give people who use care and support access to support and advice. This highlights the need for us to rethink the role of digital resources in the way care is assessed and provided going forward[[6]](#footnote-6).

The workforce strategy’s ambition to“build a digitally ready workforce” can only happen if equality and accessibility are at the heart of digital literacy, skills and capabilities.

People with protected characteristics told us this issue was a big area of concern for the future. People who use care and support, their carers and families also told us how they and their care workers needed to adapt quickly during the pandemic so they could be assessed online, as workers couldn’t provide face-to-face support.

We will work with Digital Communities Wales to support the Welsh Government’s commitment to improve people’s access to affordable broadband across Wales and to improve people’s digital knowledge and skills, so they can make the most of digital public services.

## Objective 4: The well-being of the social care and early years workforce

**What do we want to achieve?**

We will promote our well-being resources and offers, and improve access to them, to support the well-being of the social care and early years workforce.

**Why is this one of our objectives?**

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the pressures faced by frontline social care workers. These pressures – along with the increased risk of catching Covid-19 and the fear of putting family members at risk – have raised concerns about the increasing stress on workers[[7]](#footnote-7).

The pandemic continues to affect the physical and mental well-being of the workforce, with higher levels of sickness and anxiety. The social care workforce had one of the [highest death rates](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/bulletins/coronaviruscovid19relateddeathsbyoccupationbeforeandduringlockdownenglandandwales/deathsregisteredbetween9marchand30jun2020) of all occupations during the first wave of the pandemic, and the pandemic has led to a growing recognition of how important it is to support the well-being of the workforce.

We are working with others to develop initiatives and resources to support the workforce’s well-being that reflect a range of experiences in different settings and roles. In doing this, we must recognise the specific and unique challenges faced by those with protected characteristics. We believe equality, diversity and inclusion are essential to ensuring the well-being of our workforce and they must be at the heart of our approach.

People who use care and support told us the effect of Covid-19 on mental health and well-being makes this objective much more urgent. They felt that we, along with social care and early years employers, must act immediately to accomplish this objective.

## Objective 5: Equality, diversity and inclusion within Social Care Wales

**What do we want to achieve?**

We will promote opportunities to work with us, to help us achieve a more diverse and inclusive Board, staff and regulatory panel, and to widen our networks.

**Why is this one of our objectives?**

We want to lead by example. We are proud of the diversity of our Board, in terms of gender, age, disability, background and lived experiences. But we believe we can do more to improve the diversity of our Board.

We believe we can also do more to improve the diversity of our regulatory panel, which looks at the evidence gathered in cases where concerns have been raised about social care workers’ behaviour.

People who use care and support have told us that to achieve this objective change must start with us. We should share examples where this has worked well and influence our networks and partners with our positive action and communication to help spread this shift in culture.

We will continue to keep an eye our staff diversity. We want to create an environment where staff can thrive, accomplish their best work and their difference is valued. We will try to stamp out discrimination, make sure everyone has the same opportunities and encourage good relations between our staff, our Board members and anyone else who’s involved in our work.

The coronavirus pandemic has led to increased levels of poverty in Wales with lower incomes and a potential economic downturn. This will have a bigger impact on people who already experience socio-economic disadvantage and will cut across all forms of inequality.

Our work to achieve greater equality, diversity and inclusion in our organisation will help us move the [socio-economic duty](https://gov.wales/socio-economic-duty-overview) forward and reduce socio-economic disadvantage.

## What next?

We are asking you to help us make sure our equality objectives will set us off in the right direction. Are we focusing on the right things? Are we being bold enough? What will be the results of our work?

To help us create a plan of action for the next five years, please complete the questionnaire below or online.

# About you/your organisation

Are you responding to this consultation:

1. **as an individual**

**If you’re responding as an individual, are you a/an:**

[ ]  person who uses care and support

[ ]  early years worker

[ ]  social care manager

[ ]  social care worker

[ ]  social worker

[ ]  social work student

[ ]  owner of a setting providing care

[ ]  responsible individual

[ ]  employer of social care workers

[ ]  educational professional

[ ]  member of the public

[ ]  other – please describe below:

1. **on behalf of an organisation**

**If you’re responding as an organisation, is the organisation:**

[ ]  central or devolved government

[ ]  a local authority

[ ]  a social care employer

[ ]  a learning provider

[ ]  other – please describe below:

Organisation name/type of work carried out:

# Consultation questions

We’d welcome your views about our equality objectives and would be grateful if you could take the time to answer the following questions:

|  |
| --- |
| **1. Do you agree with our approach to incorporate our anti-discriminatory work in our corporate plan, but highlight the five areas we will be focusing on in our strategic equality plan?** |
| Yes [ ]  No [ ]  |
| Comments |

|  |
| --- |
| **2. Do you think our five equality objectives are achievable for the next five years? Or should we be bolder or less ambitious?** |
| Yes [ ]  No [ ]  |
| Comments |

|  |
| --- |
| **3. Do you have any comments about any of our objectives?**  |
| Yes [ ]  No [ ]  |
| Comments |

|  |
| --- |
| **4. Do you have any suggestions about how we should measure our impact in the five areas we will be focusing on?**  |
| Yes [ ]  No [ ]  |
| Comments |

|  |
| --- |
| **5. Will our equality objectives have any positive or negative impacts on groups with protected characteristics[[8]](#footnote-8)?** |
| Yes [ ]  No [ ]  |
| If yes, which protected characteristics and why? |

|  |
| --- |
| **6. Do you think we should have any other equality objectives (either instead of or in addition to the ones mentioned)? If so, what should they be?** |
|  |

**7 . What effects will our proposals have on the Welsh language, specifically on:**

**i) opportunities for people to use Welsh**

**ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.**

**How could we increase the positive effects or reduce the negative ones?**

# How we will use your views

Any response you send us will be seen in full by our staff dealing with the issues this consultation covers. It may also be seen by other members of staff to help us plan future consultations.

We will be publishing a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish the responses in full. Normally, the name and address of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, let us know in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, but we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including Social Care Wales. This includes information that has not been published.

But the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. There may sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone’s name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we decided to reveal the information.

1. *Rebuilding a more equal and fairer Wales: Focus on the unequal impact of the coronavirus pandemic*, May 2020 – Equality and Human Rights Commission [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *How coronavirus has affected equality and human rights* – Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. ***F****irst Minister’s BAME Covid-19 Advisory Group: Report of The Socioeconomic Subgroup* – June 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *GMB Report Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Workers & Covid-19* – October 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [*Fair care work. A post Covid-19 agenda for integrated employment relations in health and social care*](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/business/assets/PDF/fair-care-work.pdf), King’s Business School – June 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *The Road to Renewal: five priorities for health and social care* – King’s Fund, July 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ***The Impact of COVID-19 on social care workers’ workload, wellbeing and ability to provide care safely: Findings from the UK* – The University of Kent, November 2020** [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)