



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

# A social work workforce fit for the future

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The number of social work students has been falling in Wales since 2016. This means more people are leaving the social work profession than joining it.

So, we've worked with the Institute for Public Care at Oxford Brookes University on a new report. It explains how things are now, and what we need to do to make sure we have enough social workers in the future.

The report looks at the different ways available to qualify as a social worker in Wales. It also compares social work with other professional sectors, such as health, and the options available to social work students in the other UK nations.

## **What the report shows**

The report shows us:

- since 2016, there's been a 42 per cent drop in the number of people applying for traditional social work qualifying courses
- the number of students being accepted onto social work qualifying courses in Wales has gone down 25 per cent since 2016
- on average, only 202 qualified social workers out of the 326 we need each year in Wales are joining the profession
- we have far fewer newly qualified social workers than we need, this is getting worse and will keep getting worse unless we do something about it
- Wales has fewer social workers per 10,000 people than any other UK nation.

## **What the report recommends**

The report recommends:

- filling all the places on the social work qualifying courses each year
- trying to get 350 social workers qualified each year
- recruiting more newly qualified social workers with different backgrounds and experiences
- helping recruit people in places that don't have a lot of social workers
- promoting social work as a career.

## What we're going to do

We welcome the report's findings. In answer to its recommendations, we're going to:

- take a look at the social work degree entry requirements
- make sure social work students get the [care worker card](#) so they can access discounts for learning to drive
- continue our talks with Welsh Government about trialling social work apprenticeships
- look at different ways for people to join the social work profession
- work with our partners to make sure there's consistent information about the [bursaries and funding available to social work students](#)
- try to make it easier for students to apply for the social work bursary.

We've already made more places available on the Open University's qualifying social work courses in Wales for 2022 to 2023.

Welsh Government announced in July that it's [increased the bursaries available to new social work students](#) starting their studies from this September, partly in

response to the evidence shown in this report.

WeCare Wales is also running a campaign this summer to show social work is a valuable career choice.

## **Find out more**

To find out more about the report's findings or to get a full copy of the report, email: [iwqueries@socialcare.wales](mailto:iwqueries@socialcare.wales).