

Direct care workforce plan: 2022 to 2025

Our plan to support direct care workers so they feel cared for, work in a compassionate and inclusive culture, and feel valued for their work.

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Our vision: We want to make a positive difference to care and support in Wales for children, adults, and their families and carers.

Introduction

We've developed this direct care workforce plan in response to a specific action in [A Healthier Wales - Our Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care](#).

Social care should provide personalised care in line with the [Social Services and Wellbeing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#). Our aim "to build confidence in the workforce, and lead and support improvement in social care" is at the heart of our direct care workforce plan.

Social care is changing because people have more demanding health and care needs. We need to respond to this need now and in the future.

We need caring people with the right values, who stay in the sector for a long time . They need to be dedicated to supporting the everyday lives of the people they care for. We need people who are adaptable and flexible with lots of different skills.

We need to develop ways to carry out our services that meet our challenges. These need to use opportunities for an integrated approach across health and social care organisations.

This workforce plan is the next step in our work with the sector to change how we:

- regulate
- focus more on workforce well-being and positive mental health

- develop skills and knowledge to meet future demand
- use technology better
- build and enhance social justice
- look at equality, diversity and inclusion in the workforce
- give strategic and practical help for the direct care workforce.

We want this plan to support direct care workers feel cared for, work in a compassionate and inclusive culture, and feel valued for their work.

Direct care includes:

- residential care
- domiciliary care
- supported living
- day services
- foster care
- adult placement services
- care provided by personal assistants.

This is across the adult and children social care workforce in Wales.

This has been, and is still, a very challenging time for everyone as we all change to new ways of working. We want to thank everyone who took the time to work with us to help us develop this workforce plan. Your input, feedback and support have been very valuable.

We look forward to working with colleagues across Wales and our partners to put this workforce plan into action.

Developing the direct care workforce plan

To start developing the direct care workforce plan, we interviewed key stakeholders and partners.

Their input and feedback helped us to shape the first draft we wrote in spring 2021. This was the beginning of a long period of working with:

- the direct care workforce across statutory, private and voluntary providers
- partner agencies
- professional bodies
- trade unions
- employers
- workforce leads and commissioners.

We're pleased to report that, overwhelmingly, most people we spoke to favoured the ambition, themes and actions we're proposing.

To get their views, we:

- collected 345 completed online survey responses
- held workshops with 180 people
- carried out 30 interviews with direct care stakeholders.

Finding and using challenges and opportunities

As the workforce regulator for social care, we're responsible for developing the social care and early years workforce. We also support social care research and

help make our services better in Wales.

We want to develop and use the care workforce's skills, to support everyone who uses care and support to look after their health and well-being and achieve what matters to them.

In this context, and in partnership with Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW), we developed the first [health and social care workforce strategy](#). Launched in October 2020, it shows our ambitious work programme for the next 10 years.

Care matters to us all. It affects us all at some point. We want to make a positive difference to care and support in Wales for children, adults and their families and carers. Children and adults in every part of Wales should be able to rely on excellent social care and childcare, to support them live the lives that matter to them.

We need to support the people providing that care. We need to:

- make sure there are enough people with the right skills and experience to give the best care they can
- look after their health and well-being.

This means we must also remember the needs of volunteers and unpaid carers, who play a huge part in caring and supporting people.

We're committed to continuing our work in this area, particularly:

- continuing to support the Carers Ministerial Advisory Group
- providing learning and development to the workforce that raises awareness of the role of carers

- promoting the rights of unpaid carers to the relevant levels of support, including carers assessments, to make sure they have the right levels of support to make their important contribution.

The social care workforce is rising to meet the ongoing challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and facing more demand for services and support.

We understand the impact this is having on the direct care workforce. It's also affecting people who manage and have to adapt services, as they respond to challenges that are new to us all.

The workforce plan needs to take account of wider, cross-cutting themes, such as:

- inclusion and diversity
- language choice
- workforce well-being
- the environmental agenda, including climate change.

These are central to our ways of working. We've either got impact assessments in place as part of existing actions, or we'll take these into account when we plan new solutions.

When we were developing this engagement plan in 2021, we listened to concerns and comments about the challenges and workforce implications of:

- parity of esteem
- the supply and sustainability of the workforce
- the extra pressure caused by the pandemic.

We've long recognised the need for a national approach to address job and income security. We'll carry on working with our partners, including the Social

Care Fair Work Forum, to do this.

Welsh Government's [*Improving health and social care \(Covid-19 looking forward\)*](#) report, advised and supported by the Social Care Fair Work Forum, wants worker esteem in the health and social care sectors to be the same. This work made initial progress when some of the workforce started to receive the real living wage in April 2022.

Our Social Care Wales workforce development grant programme (SCWWDP) is a large fund to help the social care sector workforce develop in Wales. The grant helps fund a range of work programmes, including learning, development and qualifications. But we know we have more to do to achieve the ambition of the workforce strategy, and this workforce plan.

We've developed this plan's actions using co-production, and used the sector's existing strong partnership way of working.

This plan's success relies on looking after and developing these partnerships and the actions need to be built into localised workforce planning. These will help us identify the workforce challenges we can solve locally, regionally and nationally.

We're committed to addressing the above issues and focusing on improvements across seven themes in this workforce plan. We want to help resolve issues that come with finding and keeping the right people, and to help grow the workforce.

We'll work with our partners to carry on addressing our current challenges, and the challenges we anticipate lie ahead, and keep up the quality of care and support for people in all communities.

This plan needs a medium to long-term reflection of our actions, some of which we've already started. These will lead to a better, sustainable direct care workforce.

We designed the plan with the pressures on the whole system in mind. But we recognise the domiciliary care workforce needs immediate attention.

The most urgent domiciliary care workforce challenges are being addressed by Welsh Government and partnerships. We're committed to helping solve challenges that need immediate attention, as a key partner.

This plan needs to reflect the actions of other workforce plans that have been developed for the mental health workforce and the social work profession.

It's essential this plan, and future revisions, considers the clear actions in Welsh Government's [Anti Racism Wales Action Plan](#) and [Mwy na geiriau](#).

Profile: the direct care workforce

- 91,000 people work in the social care sector
- 72,155 people work in direct care services
- 81 per cent are female
- 19 per cent are male
- 61 per cent work in commissioned services
- 39 per cent work in local authorities
- 78 per cent of workers have permanent contracts
- 40 per cent of workers work 36 hours or more per week
- 90 per cent of workers have a white ethnic background
- 40 per cent of workers have some Welsh language ability

- £12 million is put into supporting the learning, development and qualification needs of the workforce through an annual grant.

Workforce plan structure

The workforce plan is split into seven themes.

Each theme has a statement of our goals, called ambitions, under that theme.

The themes and ambitions are taken from '*A healthier Wales: Our workforce strategy for health and social care*'.

Each ambition statement has a set of “I” statements. Our work with the sector confirms these statements describe the positive impact we want to have on someone working in or managing direct care services over the next three years.

We’ll measure our progress by working with and talking to the workforce over the next three years. We’ll start this with a full workforce survey in 2023.

The actions in the plan are called “we” statements”. They have a timeline showing when we’ll complete each action.

Some actions are ongoing. These don’t have a due date because it’s everyday business. We’ll still report on these to see how much progress we’ve made and if we need to change what we’re doing. We’ll report using our usual governance and scrutiny processes.

The actions fit with our strategic plan, particularly outcomes 1,2,3,5,6 and 7.

The workforce plan needs to be flexible, so we can review our progress in each of the next three years. We’ll share a summary of the “We” statements’

progress with the direct care workforce. These show what we're doing to help us achieve our goals under each of the seven themes.

This is an example of how the direct care workforce plan looks under each of the seven themes:

- **Ambition:** “By 2030, the health and social care workforce will feel valued and supported wherever they work.” – Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care
- **“We” statement:** “We will launch our employee well-being framework for your organisation to help consistently manage and monitor all aspects of employee well-being at work.” – our workforce plan
- **“I” statement:** “I feel happy, healthy and safe at work”.

Direct care workforce plan principles

The direct care workforce plan has five principles. We want a direct care workforce that:

- feels valued and is valued
- has the right values, behaviours, knowledge, skills and confidence to provide personalised care as close to home as possible
- is big enough and sustainable to provide responsive health and social care that meets the needs of the people of Wales
- works in an environment where supporting employee well-being is essential, so that people and organisations can thrive
- reflects the population's diversity, Welsh language and cultural identity.

Theme 1: An engaged, motivated and healthy workforce

Ambition: by 2030, the health and social care workforce will feel valued and supported wherever they work.

“I” statements

- “I feel happy, healthy and safe at work.”
- “I’m treated fairly and seen as an individual.”
- “As a manager, I can access support to develop my own, and the team’s, resilience and well-being.”
- “I feel the team is the right size to meet the needs of people using care and support and vacancies are filled quickly.”
- “I’m appreciated and valued for my contribution to making a positive difference to people’s lives.”
- “I’m motivated, supported and encouraged to perform at my best to provide care and support to people.”

“We” statements

- “We’ll launch our health and well-being framework to help organisations to consistently manage and monitor all aspects of employee well-being at work.”

We’ll complete this by winter 2022

- “We’ll develop resources for managers to begin assessing how well they meet the well-being at work commitments that are integral to the health and well-being framework.”

We’ll complete this by winter 2022

- “We’ll support Welsh Government to implement the real living wage. We’ll also advocate for better pay and initiatives to support the Social Care Fair Work Forum’s work and including equity of pay with health and fair better

recognition and reward for the social care sector.”

This work is ongoing

- “We’ll carry on offering well-being resources and support, including peer support learning and development, information and resources, and the care worker card.”

This work is ongoing

- “We’ll support the implementation of a mental health support service which offers well-being support to both health and social care staff.”

We’ll complete this by spring 2022

- “We’ll carry out the first all-sector survey to help us find appropriate and proportionate ways to carry on supporting the direct care workforce, its well-being and its sense of value.”

We’ll complete this by spring 2023

Theme 2: attraction and recruitment

Ambition: by 2030, health and social care will be well established as a strong and recognisable brand and the sector of choice for our future workforce.

“I” statements

- “I have support to help me understand what jobs I could do within direct care.”
- “I have a positive attitude, am committed to caring for others and I want to increase my understanding about a career in social care.”

- “I feel recruitment processes are transparent, timely and fair.”
- “I have access to a well-planned induction, which makes me feel I have the support I need to become fully operational quickly and safely in my job.”

“We” statements

- “We’ll carry on developing and making the WeCare Wales website better, promoting the work the direct care workforce carries out the roles available, and improving how the sector is perceived.”

We’ll complete this by spring 2023 (we’ll review this every year)

- “We’ll carry on supporting an 'introduction to social care' programme as a way into the sector.”

We’ll complete this by winter 2022

- “We’ll give extra support and guidance (including a national jobs portal) for all care providers to find and get people of different ages into a role in social care.”

This work is ongoing

- “We’ll carry on funding and promoting the care career connector posts in the seven Welsh regions, to link jobseekers, launch schools-based resources and promote careers in social care.”

We’ll report on this every year as part of our SCWWDP grant reporting

- “We’ll develop value-based recruitment resources to improve how we find and recruit people for social care roles.”

We’ll complete this by spring 2022

- “We’ll champion apprenticeships as a route into the sector.”
We’ll complete this by winter 2022
- “We’ll carry on supporting the WeCare Wales ambassador role from within the sector to help educate people (including schools and colleges) about the different career options and opportunities to progress.”
We’ll complete this by spring 2023

Theme 3: Seamless workforce models

Ambition: by 2030, multi-professional and multi-agency workforce models will be the norm.

“I” statements

- “I understand the level of responsibility and the kind of decision-making required of me when working with other professionals.”
- “I understand the level of accountability and autonomy required of me in my role as part of a multi-agency team or when working in partnership with other professionals.”
- “I can rely on healthcare and other partner professionals to understand my role and how social care organisations operate.”
- “I’m supported to build good working relationships between qualified and non-qualified teams.”
- “I understand the role I can play to make sure vulnerable children and adults get the support they need when I work in partnership with other professionals.”

- “I have equal levels of respect with other staff in other agencies who may work alongside me.”

“We” statements

- “We’ll finalise resources that help train and develop hospital discharge teams (health and social care) to achieve outcome-focused 'what matters' conversations with individuals and families.”

We’ll complete this by autumn 2022

- “We’ll develop resources that clearly show the career paths available to all staff in the direct care workforce.”

We’ll complete this by spring 2023

- “We’ll develop, with our partners, a national set of safeguarding training standards. These will help make sure staff have the training and resources they need when they work with others to give care and support and uphold safeguarding duties.”

We’ll complete this by autumn 2022

- “We’ll work with Health Education in Wales to develop and support the Care Home Education Facilitator programme, to make the most of nursing opportunities in social care settings (including supporting their learning and development needs).”

This work is ongoing

Theme 4: building a digitally-ready workforce

Ambition: by 2030, the digital and technological capabilities of the workforce will be well-developed and in widespread use to optimise

the way we work, to help us deliver the best possible care for people.

“I” statements

- “I understand how I can use technology to help the people I support.”
- “I understand the importance of data protection and why it’s relevant to how I use and record the electronic and written information I have about the people I support.”
- “I have access to reliable, effective and safe technology.”
- “I feel my day-to-day working life is made better by user friendly technology, which saves time, and makes a positive impact on the people who I support.”
- “I’m confident, competent and capable of making the most of digital technology in my role and use its potential to improve the quality and efficiency of personalised care.”
- “I can manage and monitor my professional development using digital tools and technology.”

“We” statements

- “We’ll carry out research to understand the delivery of digital learning, the impact this has on learning supply and learners, and publish recommendations to act on.”

We’ll complete this by autumn 2022

- “We’ll support the development of Welsh language e-learning courses with partners, to help raise awareness and language skills within the social care workforce.”

We’ll complete this by winter 2022

- “We’ll support the workforce to develop their digital skills and improve access to the equipment they need to make this happen. This is a national priority in the SCWWDP grant.”

We’ll look at this every year as part of our SCWWDP grant reporting

- “We’ll develop our digital learning platform and test opportunities for ‘Once for Wales’s’ training, including well-being support, infection prevention and control, and reducing restrictive practice.”

We’ll complete this by spring 2023 (we’ll review this every year)

- “We’ll work with partners to find more ways to improve the workforce’s digital skills.”

We’ll complete this by summer 2022 (as part of the SCWWDP grant reporting, and then we’ll review this every year)

Theme 5: excellent education and learning

Ambition: by 2030, the investment in education and learning for health and social care professionals will deliver the skills and capabilities needed to meet the needs of the people in Wales.

“I” statements

- “I work for an organisation that provides me with the required training and support.”
- “I’m able to earn a wage while receiving training, gaining qualifications and learning job-specific skills.”
- “I work for an organisation that encourages me and helps me build my confidence, motivation and skills.”

- “I have the right mix of on and off the job learning that works best for me and my employer.”
- “I’m supported to settle into my role and have access to advice and information to understand what is expected of me so I can quickly become efficient and effective.”
- “I have access to flexible learning that complements the way I learn best and helps improve my skills, knowledge and confidence.”

“We” statements

- “We’ll review the Social Care Wales workforce development grant funding, including the regional facilitation grant, in line with the findings and recommendations of the workforce strategy, sector challenges and lessons learnt, so future design and provision is useful to the sector.”

We’ll review and check this every year

- “We’ll develop and deliver learning and development programmes to put the Liberty Protection Safeguards into action.”

We’ll complete this by spring 2023

- “We’ll invest in learning to help overcome and bridge gaps caused by challenges across the sector. This will include more learning opportunities for new starters.”

We’ll review and report on this every year

- “We’ll carry on making induction frameworks available to managers and staff, and develop resources and hold workshops.”

We’ll complete this by spring 2023

- “We’ll develop social care-specific resources so more people can gain essential skills in communication and application of number.”

We’ll complete this by spring 2023

- “We’ll carry on supporting the social care workforce take up and achieve all vocational qualifications from levels 2 to 5, and give bespoke support to employers and learning providers.”

This work is ongoing

- “We’ll review how we support registered people record their continuing professional development (CPD) easily, and in an accessible way.”

We’ll complete this by spring 2023

- “We’ll carry on promoting good practice across the sector, including through the Accolades awards.”

We’ll complete this by spring 2023

Theme 6: Leadership and succession

Ambition: by 2030, leaders in the health and social care system will demonstrate collective and compassionate leadership.

“I” statements

- “I have a trusting, respectful and valued working relationship with my manager who is consistent, fair and approachable.”
- “I can access meaningful leadership development opportunities that make a significant difference to the way I can support colleagues and teams to adapt to new ways of working.”

- “I work for an organisation where leaders understand and respect other cultures and can lead a diverse group of people.”
- “I have access to opportunities to support my development as an aspiring manager.”
- “As a leader, I have access to a range of leadership and management programmes that support me to create and sustain the conditions to empower others to improve the quality of the service we provide.”
- “I work for an organisation that develops inclusive leaders at all levels in the social care sector.”

“We” statements

- “We’ll carry on supporting Level 4 and 5 management qualifications, which support the direct care sector to find and develop the next generation of supervisors and managers”.

We’ll complete this by spring 2023

- “We’ll carry on developing and supporting bespoke learning and development programmes to help existing and aspiring leaders and managers.”

We’ll complete this by winter 2022

- “We’ll carry on supporting the development of the Gwella website to host resources that support collective and compassionate leadership based on the leadership principles for health and social care in Wales.”

This work is ongoing

- “We’ll carry on supporting the setting up of peer networks for registered managers in social care in private, voluntary and public services to improve well-being and support them be resilient.”

We'll complete this by autumn 2022

- “We'll carry on our learning and development programmes to help managers and leaders be resilient.”

We'll deliver four courses in 2022 to 2023

Theme 7: Workforce shape and supply

Ambition: by 2030, we will have a sustainable workforce in sufficient numbers to meet the health and social care needs of our population.

“I” statements

- “I respect and value the views of the individuals, families and communities I work with.”
- “As a manager, I'm confident I can recruit staff with the skills and values I need without limiting my service.”
- “I work with colleagues who have the required skills, knowledge, values and behaviours so we're best placed to innovate and provide increasingly complex care and support.”
- “I'm listened to by others when discussing the complexity and value of direct care and the skills needed to provide support that's culturally relevant to people in my local community.”
- “I work in a setting that welcomes Welsh speakers, is respectful of other languages and strives to represent the diversity of the community it serves as part of providing truly person-centred care.”

- “I respect and value the crucial role of unpaid carers, voluntary and community organisations as long-term partners in supporting the health and well-being of children, families and adults in my local community.”

“We” statements

- “We’ll review how we approach workforce planning, and create resources to help develop effective and timely workforce planning.”

We’ll complete this by spring 2023

- “We’ll improve our understanding of Welsh language skills in the social care workforce to help inform our, and our partners’, *Mwy na geiriau* plans.”

We’ll complete this by winter 2022

- “We’ll carry on developing and improving our data portal.”

We’ll complete this by autumn 2022 (we’ll revisit this every year, using what we’ve learned)

- “We’ll carry on improving how we collect social care data and use it to benefit people needing care and support in Wales.”

We’ll complete this by autumn 2022 (we’ll revisit this every year, using what we’ve learned)

- “We’ll carry on helping develop the way we collect workforce data to improve local, regional and national workforce planning.”

We’ll complete this by summer 2023