Gofal Cymdeithasol Cymru
Social Care Wales

Ymlaen implementation plan: 2026 to 2027

How we'll work with partners in 2026 to 2027 to achieve the ambitions of Ymlaen - the research, innovation and improvement strategy for social care.

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How we'll work with partners in 2026 to 2027 to achieve the ambitions of Ymlaen - the research, innovation and improvement strategy for social care.

Our vision

To help people leading, developing and delivering social care feel confident, supported and inspired to use evidence and innovation to make a positive difference to care and support in Wales.

How we'll work

We'll work with partners across Wales to share learning, make the most of evidence and experience, and respond to new challenges and opportunities. We'll listen to diverse voices, involve people with lived experience, learn from what works, and support collaboration across the sector.

How we'll monitor progress

We’ll assess and monitor our progress using actions where we see:

- more people using research, evidence, data and insight in their work
- more collaboration across organisations and sectors
- greater participation in learning, communities and networks
- an increased use of Social Care Wales resources and support
- more examples of innovation and improvement being applied in practice.

What we'll do

To achieve Ymlaen’s vision, Social Care Wales will work with partners during 2026 to 2027 to:

Set direction

Show

Identify shared priorities for research, innovation and improvement so we can direct attention, resource and action to where it’s needed most.

Why?

We want to make sure our focus is positive, helpful, productive and informed by what matters most to people. We need to take an intersectional approach, where we consider how different kinds of discrimination can interact and shape people’s unique experiences.

1. Coordinate a collective leadership approach for the delivery of Ymlaen

We'll coordinate the delivery of Ymlaen with partners across Wales by establishing governance arrangements through a Strategic Implementation Group. We'll monitor the implementation plan and bring partners together to review progress, learning and future priorities.

2. Develop and share evidence, intelligence and insight about the workforce

We'll carry out our annual Have Your Say workforce survey and produce workforce insight briefings and data summaries.

We'll continue to develop the Data Portal, expand available datasets and improve access to workforce and social care intelligence. We’ll make thorough and meaningful social care workforce data available in different

formats and maintain workforce dashboards to support planning, policy and practice.

These insights will be used to improve understanding of the workforce and support decision-making across social care.

3. Improve how social care data is collected

We'll lead the development of social care data standards for adults' services, children's services, the social care workforce and integrated care records. We'll do this by working with the Digital in Social Care (DiSC) Cymru partnership.

We'll support implementation of data standards and contribute to work that improves the quality, consistency and usefulness of social care data across Wales.

4. Inform national priorities and future agendas

We'll work with Regional Partnership Boards to deliver a programme of research roadshows to support national conversations on key topics.

We'll develop a workforce plan for residential children's care, and plan and deliver learning opportunities to support workforce development and therapeutic approaches in children's services.

We'll contribute to work linked to the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, including leadership development and workforce data activity.

We'll use the findings from the digital potential tool to inform national priorities through working with partners such as DiSC Cymru.

5. Support national safeguarding implementation

We'll develop safeguarding resources, including working in partnership with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board, and support implementation of

national safeguarding training.

Connect

Show

‘Join the dots’ between different types of support for research, innovation and improvement in social care.

Why?

We need to coordinate the support for people co-designing, delivering and leading services that nurtures a positive culture of working together. We need to bring about action and be flexible to meet different needs.

1. Strengthen partnerships to support social care innovation

We'll play an active role in the Digital in Social Care (DiSC) partnership, supporting the development of digital and data-enabled approaches across the sector. We'll continue to contribute to and lead groups that support the use of digital and technology in social care.

We'll work with health and social care partners to develop and promote innovation support. We’ll increase understanding of social care, connect people working on similar initiatives, and link them to available support.

2. Build and sustain communities of practice and peer networks

We'll coordinate communities of practice and peer networks that bring people together to learn, share experience and address shared challenges. This includes the:

- Evidence community

- Data community

- Digital community

- New models of children's residential care community

- Responsible Individuals community

- Approved mental health professionals (AMHPs) community

- Compassionate leadership network

- Well-being network

- Strengths-based practice network.

We'll create opportunities for members to share learning, explore emerging issues, build connections, discuss challenges and develop solutions together. We'll also give support to people who would like to establish communities of practice.

3. Share learning and ideas

We'll identify, capture and share learning from research, innovation and improvement activity across Wales. We'll promote and share practice through the project finder and continuing to develop and promote the Insight Collective website.

4. Coordinate support for improvement

We'll develop and test a joined-up approach that brings support from different parts of the organisation together to meet people's needs better.

Enable

Show

Create conditions that enable positive and lasting change in social care.

Why?

We need to make it possible for people to learn, grow and respond to the challenges in social care. Areas like regulation and funding approaches have the potential to put up barriers if they're not designed to support our joint vision and ambitions for social care.

1. Strengthen social care data and digital foundations

We'll work with partners to understand and identify opportunities to improve the safe, effective and consistent use of social care data across Wales. This includes:

- exploring ways of sharing social care data across electronic systems and organisational boundaries. We'll develop social care standards to identify information easily and including it on the FHIR (Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources) framework which will be used by system suppliers in future

- providing resources and learning on information governance

- identifying opportunities to improve how information is collected, shared and used in care and support records

- promoting learning and progress from key national programmes including Connecting Care, the National Data Resource and the Integrated Care Record.

We'll collect and publish useful digital resources on our Insight Collective website to increase awareness and support learning. We'll continue providing learning workshops to improve digital confidence.

2. Develop positive cultures in social care

We'll co-design and test innovative approaches to understand what works in practice to develop and embed positive cultures. We'll reflect on what we've

learned from this work, develop resources based on findings, and share insights that can support wider adoption across the sector.

3. Building capacity and engagement with research

We'll implement and promote the support we provide to researchers to help deliver high-quality social care research that informs policy, practice and improvement.

We'll produce evidence summaries that present research findings in ways that are easy to understand, so that they can be used in practice.

Support

Show

Provide direct support to people working in social care to encourage research, innovation and improvement.

Why?

We need to support research, innovation and improvement in ways that respond to the ambitions and complexities of social care. We'll focus on our national policy aspirations to create a fairer and more equal country.

1. Support evidence-informed practice, evaluation and improvement

We'll work in partnership with Swansea University to implement Developing Evidence Enriched Practice (DEEP) methods. This will include delivering training, and providing tools, resources and practical advice.

We'll support people working in social care to apply knowledge to practice and use evidence in decision-making. We'll provide training and support to build capacity in evaluation and impact measurement through practical learning, networks and events.

We'll maintain and actively promote the Research, innovation and improvement skills resource through ongoing communication and engagement activities, making sure content remains current, relevant and accessible.

2. Strengthen leadership and workforce capability

We'll support leadership development in social care by:

- promoting national leadership and management programmes

- improving knowledge and skills for compassionate leadership through training and workshops, supporting the sector to embed compassionate leadership principles into everyday practice

- supporting the implementation of the digital potential tool findings.

3. Support workforce well-being and strengths-based practice

We'll support workforce well-being by improving the Your well-being matters framework and associated resources.

We'll provide workshops, training, resources and peer learning opportunities that support people and organisations to embed strengths-based approaches in day-to-day practice.

Disrupt

Show

Inspire new ways of working.

Why?

We need to be bolder and more courageous in tackling the challenges and inequalities faced in social care. This is the only way we'll create innovative and sustainable models of care and support.

We need to challenge the way things are done now, which will deliver more of the same, while appreciating work already being done to improve outcomes. This will help us respond to what matters, now and in the future.

1. Accelerate innovation in social care

We'll support people and organisations to develop, test and refine new ideas through individual and group innovation coaching. We'll deliver bite-size learning and skills sessions and share learning from innovation activity through the project finder.

We'll work with partners such as Contracts for Innovation and Infuse on their challenge calls.

2. Champion digital innovation

We'll contribute to national digital and technology groups and maintain active membership of the Digital in Social Care (DiSC) partnership. We'll continue to promote use of the digital potential tool and work with partners to implement learning about digital maturity and literacy.

We'll share knowledge about digital and technology-enabled approaches, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), and contribute to research and development activity in this area.

Read the strategy

Read Ymlaen: the research, innovation and improvement strategy for social care 2024 to 2029