

Welsh Government MANIFESTO 2021

UNISON is the UK's biggest trade union and the largest public sector union in Europe. UNISON represents and acts for members working in a range of public services and utilities, whether they're employed by private companies, public authorities or in the community and voluntary sector.

Strong and resilient public services have never been more important

We are responding to the greatest challenge for a generation and our response will shape how our society looks for years to come.

Public services and public service workers, including those in the community and voluntary sector, rose admirably to the challenge of a lifetime, but years of squeezed budgets driven by an austerity agenda has meant many services have been pushed to the brink of collapse.

It is essential that, following this crisis, we rebuild a society that leaves nobody behind, that creates a fair work nation, and develops resilient and responsive public services for now and for the future.

Social Partnership

The COVID pandemic put social partnership working in Wales to the test.

As the pandemic unfolded, social partnership may have been the difference between life and death for many workers in high-risk sectors.

The start of the pandemic saw shortages of PPE and a lack of PPE guidance for various healthcare and social care settings; the closure of schools and colleges and the move to blended learning; the opening of hubs for the children of key workers; limited on-site university provision; the continuation of integral local government services including refuse collection and safeguarding services.

In the face of these difficulties, Welsh Government, trade unions, and employers came together to ensure our communities and those that serve them were offered as much protection as possible in the workplace – from sourcing additional PPE, to an all-Wales risk assessment tool, and the fast implementation of new systems and processes in workplaces.

Partnership working has been at the heart of the Welsh Government's response to this deadly virus – it has demonstrated its' worth time and time again.

But its' worth goes beyond crisis management. Social partnership is the bedrock for fair work in Wales and is the only way to effectively promote fair procurement, a real living wage for all, stop the abuse of zero-hour contracts, and ensure workers' rights are protected in the face of Brexit.

The benefits of partnership working are no longer in dispute. In the next term, the Welsh Government must legislate to ensure the principles of social partnership are embedded in Wales in order to achieve a fair work nation.

National Care Service for Wales

The pandemic has shone a beacon on the significance of the social care sector and the fragile state of the sector.

The marketisation of social care has failed. Social care should be publicly delivered, and services should be brought back in-house.

We need to rebuild a resilient social care sector that puts service users and the workforce before profit and minimises overly bureaucratic and costly procurement processes.

Now is the time for a National Care Service for Wales. As a part of National Care Service there must be a guarantee that:

- The professional standards embedded in the sector in Wales to be reflected in the standards of pay
- A standard employment contract for care work – including sick pay, contracted hours and pay for all hours on duty, including ‘sleep ins’, travel time and continued professional development
- Full funding provision
- Ongoing partnership working, collective bargaining and trade union representation within the sector.

The true worth of social care and social care workers can never be forgotten again and we must give the sector the priority it deserves as our communities recover from this crisis.

Equality-led recovery

The pandemic has exacerbated and underlined the inequities that already existed across our society.

The gap between rich and poor has grown, and the mortality rate of COVID has been higher in deprived areas.

Black people have suffered a disproportionate impact of COVID both in terms of health outcomes of the disease and financial impacts, with Black people more likely to report a drop in income during this period.

Young people have been more likely to be furloughed or lose their job.

Children from poorer households have been less able to access and benefit from online learning.

People with learning disabilities are dying from COVID at six times the rate of the rest of the population, and people with disabilities are twice as likely to lose their job.

A specific fund was set up to allow workers in social care to afford to take time off to stop the spread of the disease.

The list goes on.

But we are clear, this is not the society we want for the future and so we must commit to an equality-led recovery that ensures nobody is left behind.

We need a society that puts people first; that pays workers their worth; properly funded public services; good quality and readily available social housing; a fair work nation.

How we respond to this crisis will impact on people’s lives for years to come, and so it is imperative that equality is at the very heart of our recovery.

UNISON priorities

We want to work with future Senedd Members to ensure Wales is a resilient, prosperous, fair, and progressive place to live, work and learn.

We therefore ask MS candidates to support our three priorities and work with UNISON to deliver on these pledges:

- **Commit to the principles of social partnership and prioritise the enactment of a Social Partnership Act**
- **Commit to the establishment of a National Care Service**
- **Commit to an equality-led recovery.**