



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

## We need your views for the workforce strategy for social care

Have your say about our proposed actions to support the social care and social work workforce over the next three years.

The consultation closes at midnight, 25 June 2023.

### Overview

Last summer we held engagement events to help us shape the next phase of the delivery of [A Healthier Wales: Our Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care](#). We listened to what you had to say and we've identified the main themes, reviewed workforce intelligence, research reports and policy commitments, and met with stakeholders to develop the next phase of actions for 2023 to 2026.

The [National Workforce Implementation plan](#) (NWIP) for the NHS has already been published, so this delivery plan focuses on social care and joint actions with our health partners.

We want to hear a range of opinions about this plan, from anyone who has an interest in the health and social care workforce. We're particularly interested in hearing from people working in health and social care in Wales, as well as those who access care and support services, carers and volunteers.

Tell us what you think about the draft actions for 2023 to 2026, before we launch a finalised action plan in the autumn of 2023.

### How to respond

We explain our proposals in each section. If you'd like to have your say about our changes, complete this document and email it to us. [workforcestrategy@socialcare.wales](mailto:workforcestrategy@socialcare.wales).

You can also send us your views in a different format if it's easier for you. For example, you can write to us, or send a video or audio recording.

If you need a copy of this consultation in a different format or have any questions, please contact us at [workforcestrategy@socialcare.wales](mailto:workforcestrategy@socialcare.wales).

The closing date for the consultation is **midnight, 25 June 2023**.

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

## About you/your organisation

Are you responding to this consultation:

### **a) as an individual**

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

- ☐ person who accesses care and support
- ☐ unpaid carer
- ☐ 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
- ☐ volunteer
- ☐ other – please describe below:

### **b) on behalf of an organisation**

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

- ☐ central or devolved government
- ☐ a local authority

- ☐ a private provider
- ☐ a voluntary sector provider
- ☐ a learning provider
- ☒ other – please describe below:

Trade union representing thousands of care workers

**Organisation name/type of work carried out:**

UNISON Cymru Wales

# Social care delivery plan 2023 to 2026

## Our priorities for the workforce

It's nearly three years since the launch of the [Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy](#), and since then we've seen significant challenges caused by a worldwide pandemic, the cost of living crisis, the war in Ukraine and the impact of Brexit.

But, despite these difficulties our aim remains the same, which is to have a motivated, engaged and valued health and social care workforce, with the capacity, competence, and confidence to meet the needs of the people of Wales.

There have been significant challenges over the last three years, but we've made progress, as you can see in our [delivery plan annual report](#). But despite this progress, social care is facing major workforce challenges, with difficulties attracting people into the sector, recruiting enough people, and retaining the existing workforce.

Alongside these challenges, the workforce is still feeling the ongoing impact of the pandemic and the efforts that were made to keep services going, keep people safe and meet increasing demand. Staff well-being is also being affected by increased levels of stress, fatigue and burnout, along with perceived poor working conditions and a lack of professional development opportunities.

These workforce issues are a priority to solve as we move forward. We must act quickly to resolve the challenges facing the existing workforce and deal with the issue of attracting new people into the workforce. We need to create the right conditions to allow people to deliver quality services.

We can't provide high quality health and social care services and support to the people of Wales without our workforce, who work in a range of statutory, private or voluntary provider services, as volunteers or carers. All these workers and volunteers are included in this strategy.

When we describe the workforce, we include foster carers, volunteers and unpaid carers. The actions we include, where relevant, apply to these groups just as much as they do to the more traditional definition of the workforce.

We also want to improve services in Wales in line with the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act](#) and the [A healthier Wales](#) ambitions, to deliver care closer to home and to improve the quality of support for vulnerable children and adults of all ages. The pandemic had a significant effect on the workforce, but more critically across our communities, especially for those who rely on good quality care and support. We're now seeing greater pressure on the sector caused by more families living in poverty, and increased demands because of demographic changes.

The 2023 to 2026 delivery plan builds on the progress made so far and includes developments based on feedback we heard from engagement with the sector. It describes the actions that will help to move the workforce forward over the next three years, and includes:

- new actions, based on your feedback
- existing actions that will carry on as they're essential to our work
- the next phase of development of previous actions.

The actions build on areas we can take forward effectively in partnership with our health colleagues. These areas of joint work include well-being, the mental health workforce plan, leadership, and workforce development to support integrated care and support.

The actions of the workforce strategy have also led to the development of sector specific workforce plans for:

- the [direct care workforce](#)
- [the social work profession](#)
- the [mental health workforce](#), developed in partnership with Health Education Improvement Wales (HEIW).

These plans help to support the aims of the workforce strategy and have actions in common, such as well-being approaches, attraction, and recruitment. They also include actions that are specific to the relevant part of the sector.

## Technical documents

The documents below include background information that helped us develop the plan.

- **Engagement and consultation** – how we worked with the sector to understand their priorities and how it helped shape the actions in this plan.
- **Horizon scanning** – the policy and legislative frameworks we considered when setting the actions in the plan.
- **Workforce profile** – data including how many people are in the workforce, how many are qualified, their gender and age, so we know its size and makeup.

## Fundamental principles

This delivery plan builds on the strategy's ambitions to make sure there are fair and equitable opportunities for its workforce. It also embraces the recommendations laid out in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's [Is Wales Fairer?](#) Report.

Work has already taken place to make sure the fundamental principles of workforce well-being, the Welsh language and inclusion are woven into all the actions of the strategy. The goal is that the actions in this plan continue to have all three at their centre.

## Well-being

When we developed the strategy in 2019, there was already increasing and compelling evidence linking the well-being, capability and engagement of the health and social care workforce to improved outcomes for the people we provide health, care, and support to. The pandemic has increased the level of concern for the workforce's well-being and significant efforts have been made in the last three years to provide staff with support.

Your feedback made it clear that well-being support should be available for all parts of the workforce and throughout an employee's time in post. Support should be offered proactively and not in response to a particular issue. The well-being of the team should be looked after and they should be given a degree of control and autonomy.

This plan carries on the initial work of making sure well-being remains a priority for all organisations, employers, leaders, and managers. Members of the workforce should also be able to take responsibility for their own health and well-being, with relevant support in place.

This is supported by the social care, early years and childcare health and well-being framework, [Your well-being matters](#).

## Welsh language

Your feedback about the Welsh language was clear. We need to change people's perception that their Welsh should be perfect and we must help people gain the confidence to speak Welsh, without them fearing they'll be judged for it not being of a high enough standard. You want learning Welsh to be seen as a positive and fun opportunity that can make an important contribution to your work and to the people accessing care and support.

As with the other important principles of inclusion and well-being, the Welsh language will be central to how most actions are delivered, so it becomes part of the solution rather than a separate solution in itself.

The plan will build on and reflect the foundations of the [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(2015\)](#), and [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers](#) to create an engaged, healthy, flexible, responsive and sustainable workforce for the future that reflects Wales's diverse population, its cultural identity and the Welsh language.

Together with HEIW, we were heavily involved in developing the workforce actions of the [Mwy na geiriau five-year plan](#) and we're committed to making sure the workforce uses the Welsh language as much as possible day-to-day. The plan identifies the actions we should take to support this ambition and build on the work already

completed to supporting a bilingual workforce, such as our [WeCare Wales](#) campaign that focused on the Welsh language at work.

We need to use data to understand the skills that already exist within the workforce. This will help us provide support to continuously improve the workforce's knowledge and skills, so they can provide new models of support to meet the needs of current and future populations.

We've helped to develop a new [Welsh language checker](#) for the social care sector, to collect information about workers' Welsh language skills in speaking, reading, listening and writing. The checker helps workers to take the next step in their language development and use.

## Inclusion

The feedback we heard during our engagement work confirms there's still work to be done to make the social care sector fully inclusive. We need to do more to reach those less heard voices in our workforce and we need to train and educate people at all levels about what true inclusion means.

We've contributed to and responded to several plans that will help us become a more inclusive and compassionate sector. These include:

- [Mwy na geiriau](#)
- [Anti Racist Wales Action Plan](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales](#)
- [Learning Disability Action Plan for Wales](#)
- [HIV Action Plan for Wales](#)
- [Strategy for Unpaid Carers.](#)

Those contributions are now included as direct actions within this plan or they're an important part of how the actions will be delivered. Each action aims to contribute to creating a culture of inclusion, fairness and equity across our workforce.

# The delivery plan's structure

The delivery plan is structured under each of the seven themes of the workforce strategy.

1. An engaged, motivated and healthy workforce
2. Attraction and recruitment
3. Seamless workforce models
4. Building a digitally ready workforce
5. Excellent education and learning
6. Leadership and succession
7. Workforce supply and shape

For each theme we've summarised the main issues and identified the most important actions to contribute to our 2030 ambition.

The ambition of the workforce strategy won't be achieved by one partner or one stakeholder alone. We need collaborative and partnership working at all levels. The progress made so far has been based on effective joint working in a range of areas, which will continue through the next phase of delivery.

We recognise that we have an important role to play to support the implementation of the workforce strategy, so we've included in [Appendix A](#) the actions we'll take to support delivery in the first year of this next phase.

# 1. An engaged, motivated, and healthy workforce

## What you told us

The sector wants us to prioritise its well-being. This was clear from what we heard during the engagement work we carried out in 2022. The workforce is often described as fatigued, exhausted, and burnt out, so it's crucial that this theme continues and carries on the work already done in the last few years.

As the workforce becomes more diverse, we must put safeguards in place to support people to become and remain valued members of an inclusive workforce.

The sector also made it clear that it wants equal access to the well-being offer and parity between social care and health. This parity isn't just in pay, but also in wider terms and conditions, including more flexibility in working arrangements and creative solutions to employment contract offers. The workforce wants better ways of gathering their views and they want to see action being taken because of those views. They were clear that the little things matter as much as the big changes.

Work has begun in several important areas where we've introduced [a Health and well-being framework](#) where employers and employees can measure their organisation against an agreed set of standards. We have, for the first time, a universal [mental health support service](#) that's free at the point of access for the whole workforce across health and social care. We've also built peer networks that provide mutual help and support for managers to help build resilience.

We've started essential work around terms and conditions for social workers, and we've supported the work of the [Social Care Fair Work Forum](#) who are working on a career progression framework that aims to be linked to pay.

We recognise that there's much more to do to make sure the sector is highly valued and the workforce feels appreciated. The preventative agenda for well-being is just as important as people taking responsibility for their own health and well-being, but the workforce needs support, time and space to do this.

## Our ambition by 2030

The health and social care workforce will feel valued and supported wherever they work.

## Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026

1. Support employers to embed workforce well-being in their organisations by implementing and refreshing the Health and well-being framework.

2. Work towards parity, fair reward and recognition through the Social Care Fair Work Forum and WLGA led consideration of social work terms and conditions.
3. Support workforce well-being by promoting and developing well-being resources and services, including [Canopi](#) and [the Care Worker Card](#).
4. Maintain and develop peer support networks, communities and a national conference to share different ways of improving workforce well-being.
5. Carry out research and engagement work, including an annual independent survey of registered workers, and use what we learn to improve our understanding of how to support workforce well-being.

## How we'll measure progress against the actions

- We'll use the annual independent survey of registered workers to help us decide what to focus on in future.
- We'll use what we learn from the evaluation of the Health and well-being framework to decide what our future priorities are.
- We'll report on how the well-being resources and support services are being used.

## Consultation questions

**Do you think the actions in this theme will support the ambition of the workforce strategy?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Unsure

**If not:**

**How can they be strengthened?**

There is a glaring omission of any mention of trade unions and the benefits they bring to individual care workers, in terms of improved health and well-being and to the care sector and employers in general.

Without the inclusion and promotion of trade unions as a force for good in this way, the suggested actions may be well-meaning, but will have more limited impact that SCW would like.

SCW point (4) of the Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026 says “Maintain and develop peer support networks, communities and a national conference to share different ways of improving workforce well-being.” Essentially, this describes functions carried out and provided by a trade union representing care workers. It would make more sense for the positive role of trade unions for the care sector to be underlined by SCW.

There is no mention of how employers should engage with staff about their health and safety at work.

The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act is now law. Encouraging employers to recognise trade unions and involve them in workplace planning and decision making, fits with the principles of the Act.

The universal mental health support service, building of peer networks and well-being resources are valid, but are all reactive, i.e. what care workers might do once there is already a problem and things have gone wrong. We suggest below, how SCW and employers could be proactive and preventative on mental and physical health by better engaging with staff.

It is right for Social Care Wales to be supportive of the work of the Social Care Fair Work Forum on pay and recognition. However, fair reward is also about decent supplements being paid for overtime, night and public holiday entitlements, sleep-ins and travel time, as well as paid time for training.

As well as providing safer working environments, it is a fact that where trade unions are recognised, employees' wages and employment conditions are better. Again, SCW could have promoted the importance of trade union membership here as a driver to improve the improve pay and fair reward from the ground up.

In the same way the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (1974) acknowledged the best way to tackle unsafe working environments and drive-up standards was for employees to be part of the solution, only union representatives can ensure care employers are meeting their responsibilities elsewhere too. This is especially important because Welsh government doesn't hold powers over employment law.

Care workers are now registered as professional and should have the opportunity to receive the free legal protection which trade unions can provide.

We offer a pertinent example here. Despite additional funding from the Welsh government to fund an uplift to the Foundation Living Wage for registered care workers in April 2022, care workers at Integra Community Living Options did not see any extra money in their pay packets and union members were forced to approach Cardiff County UNISON Branch about the issue.

A concerted UNISON campaign lasting months won a significant victory in April 2023, with £780 back pay going to every support worker to cover the wage increase. We kept the pressure up and the following month, support workers were paid the 2023/24 uplift. These two payments have resulted in a 15% increase overall.

This is money care workers were due and without the dedication of UNISON representatives, they would not have received. That is why trade union recognition and the promotion of trade unions as a driver for positive change by SCW, is so crucial.

**What actions need to be added?**

We suggest improvements to care workers' physical and mental health would best be addressed by that the establishment of safety committees and encouragement of safety reps.

Specifically, UNISON proposes a change to the wording of the guidance attached to Regulation 57 of the Statutory Guidance for Service Providers and Responsible Individuals on meeting service standard regulations for:

- Care Home Services
- Domiciliary Support Services
- Secure Accommodation Services; and
- Residential Family Centre Services

The guidance should also say 'establish a safety committee and encourage safety representatives to contribute as described in the Safety Committees and Safety Reps Regulations 1977 (as amended) and Health and Safety (Consultation with employees) Regulations 1996 (as amended)'. This would then be included in the Care Inspectorate Wales's inspections and a major improvement in standards will be delivered.

Safety committees and trade union appointed safety representatives in care would have the following benefits:

- Improve safety, decrease incidents and accidents and lower ill health related to work
- Improve morale of care work staff
- Lower sickness levels
- Reduce staff turnover and associated costs
- Reduce agency costs
- Be an important step in ensuring a collective worker voice for care workers
- Since Health and Safety is, in most cases, a collaborative approach, the creation of safety committees within all care workplaces/ providers will help encourage a partnership working approach and allay potential fears of providers about welcoming trades unions in collective bargaining and recognition agreements.

Early in the covid pandemic, there were cases of care workers going into homes when they were ill because they had no sick pay. Had health and

safety committees existed at that time, with care workers encouraged to participate, this would have been avoided.

**What do we need to consider when we implement the actions of this theme?**

We recommend Social Care Wales works with trade unions to ensure Fair Work clauses become standard in the commissioning process.

**Any further comments?**

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## 2. Attraction and recruitment

### What you told us

The workforce strategy describes our ambition for the social care sector to be a model employer, and for there to be a positive change in how a career in social care is perceived by the public.

During our engagement work you told us that retention is as just as important as recruitment, and that we need to focus on the existing workforce as well as the future workforce. We had significant discussions about whether the theme of retention is missing from the strategy, but we've decided not to include it as its own theme as retention should improve once many of the actions in the strategy are achieved.

Looking at the future workforce, you explained that perceptions of a career in social care need to change. You want more of an emphasis on working with schools and colleges, so we can talk to young people at the beginning of their career journey. You also want to show people the value of apprenticeships as a way of entering the social care sector.

You supported our continued efforts to run [pre-employment programmes](#), which give those taking part job seeking skills and a better understanding of the sector, which will hopefully help improve retention.

We need to show that working in social care can be fulfilling, rewarding and socially valuable. We're working to make it more attractive, by improving the overall terms and conditions and offering clear career pathways for those who want to progress.

We want to attract a diverse range of people into careers in social care and social work that reflect the communities within which they work. We also want to support the ambition of [Stronger, Fairer, Greener Wales: A Plan for Employability and Skills](#), for social care to continue to be an important part of the foundational economy across Wales. This extends to supporting work around international recruitment, as we look as far and wide as possible for our workforce.

We know there are big challenges and an enormous amount of work to do, but we also know there are around 84,000 people in this sector who love the work they do. They provide fantastic support, day in and day out, and are true champions and ambassadors for the sector. We need to help them feel proud of their work and promote the sector as a positive place to work.

Over the last couple of years, we've used those ambassadors and champions in our [WeCare Wales](#) campaign to tell positive stories about why they work in the sector. These stories have been shared in print, on radio, through online articles, social media and television campaigns and we've tried to target underrepresented groups, including men and Welsh speakers.

## Our 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.

## Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026

6. Provide clear approaches to engagement with the sector, to support a co-ordinated approach to attract workers into social care.
7. Develop and implement plans to continually promote social care as a career of choice.
8. Develop ways of widening access to careers in social care, including pathways for volunteers.
9. Improve sector recruitment practices.

## How we'll measure progress against the actions

- We'll report on the number of vacancies.
- We'll report on the changes in public perceptions of the social care sector.
- We'll report on the reach and engagement levels of each WeCare Wales campaign.
- We'll report on the numbers of people moving into education and/or employment from the Introduction to Social Care programme.

## Consultation questions

**Do you think the actions in this theme will support the ambition of the workforce strategy?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Unsure

**If not:**

**How can they be strengthened?**

Care workers and those bodies and organisations associated with the sector all recognise the vital work care staff undertake and they are well aware it is fulfilling and socially valuable.

Public perceptions of care workers changed significantly for the better during the covid pandemic, but it is the scandalously low wages and poor employment conditions that make the profession a less attractive career option for potential candidates and the existing workforce.

Many see the high level of responsibility and poor financial return and opt instead for better wages and less responsibility working in a supermarket.

The work being undertaken by the Social Care Fair Work Forum on pay and progression should give the opportunity to better attract workers to the sector.

#### **What actions need to be added?**

Training is key to developing 'career pathways'. Training for care workers, particularly in the private and not-for-profit care sectors, is limited. To be most effective for improving standards in the sector, and for the individual care worker, it is essential for training to be paid and undertaken in work time.

As well as developing careers within social care, (to senior care worker and manager etc.), it is important to recognise social care can be springboard into working in other public services occupations such as social work and roles within the NHS. The skills that every care worker needs now should be seen as transferable for a great many jobs.

#### **What do we need to consider when we implement the actions of this theme?**

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#### **Any further comments?**

UNISON would like to see SCW take action to prevent the use of covenants on staff preventing them from free movement between employers. For example, one of the largest children's service providers recently insisted on staff signing a legal covenant preventing working with competitors in the sector.

The use of covenants tying care workers to their employer, can act as a block on improving employment conditions across the sector. Private companies will understand they will be able to have less regard for increasing pay and conditions of service, or the level of the health and well-being support they should be providing to staff as a matter of course.

### 3. Seamless workforce models

#### What you told us

Current policy makes it clear that we want to provide care at home, or as close to home as possible, which is consistent with the wishes of people receiving care and support. The pandemic and ongoing workforce challenges have made this ambition difficult as there's been an increase in the number of people referred to and remaining in hospital. But, if there were enough staff within the workforce people could be supported to have care and support at home or in the community.

This came sharply into focus last autumn and winter when efforts were made to try to increase the capacity of community placements to relieve some of the pressure facing the NHS. It has since been agreed that this needs to become core business for both health and social care.

Work is taking place to decide what the new ways of working across boundaries should look like. Once this is confirmed, we can decide on workforce solutions for these new models and service designs. It's likely that this change in culture and service delivery will take place step-by-step, and there won't be extensive changes overnight. But, either way, we need to be ready to support the workforce across health and social care to make that transition.

For adults living in our communities, there's a critical connection between social care and services such as housing, which allow individuals to live as independent lives as possible. New approaches such as the strategic primary care programme and integrated community services mean the workforce needs to work differently.

For vulnerable children, the main aim will always be to help families stay together wherever possible. This relies on a sufficient and stable social care and social work workforce, so that families receive meaningful and consistent support. Where it isn't possible for families to stay together, children and young people need a safe and loving environment to call home, and access to therapeutic support. This needs a skilled workforce that offers continuity to build meaningful relationships. There's significant cross-sector development work taking place, including eliminating profit, making sure there's a consistent advocacy offer, and enhancing the role of the corporate parent.

Work has already begun to develop the role of trusted assessor and to make sure this is supported through relevant resources and training. Work has also started around increasing access to learning pathways into nursing, reablement roles in social care settings and developing trauma informed practice.

During our engagement work, you were clear that there should be a focus on what the person receiving care and support and their carers need. You felt that the workforce should be given permission to develop and adopt new ways of working, including working across professional boundaries. You asked for a collaborative

approach to shared problems, but felt that communication was the biggest barrier to seamless working.

Networking in safe places, where people can freely explore and share solutions would encourage innovation and promote new ways of working, but true seamless working would need to be considered alongside new models of joint commissioning.

## Our ambition by 2030

Multi-professional and multi-agency workforce models will be the norm.

## Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026

10. Implement initiatives to support working across health and social care boundaries.
11. Develop ways of supporting multi-professional working.
12. Identify and respond to workforce implications of new policy drivers and service models.

## How we'll measure progress against the actions

- We'll give progress reports against the ambition of the mental health workforce plan.
- We'll give progress reports about the numbers of social care workers taking up places on nurse training and returning to the social care sector after graduation.
- We'll report on our progress against the actions related to new policy drivers and service models.

## Consultation questions

**Do you think the actions in this theme will support the ambition of the workforce strategy?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Unsure

**If not:**

**How can they be strengthened?**

Please see our answers to the questions in the previous section.

**What actions need to be added?**

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**What do we need to consider when implementing the actions of this theme?**

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**Any further comments?**

Reference is made to cross-sector development work including eliminating profit, which we fully support. It is important that assurances are given to staff about transitioning under elimination of profit agenda and all local authority care service workers should be able to voice concerns through trade union-organised local consultations.

We know private care employers are frightening staff around this issue in terms of job security, the children they currently look after, and their future.

The Welsh Labour government has taken the correct decision that there should be no place for profit in the care of looked after children. In fact, the same moral principle applies elsewhere and there should be no place for profit anywhere in social care.

## 4. Building a digitally ready workforce

### What you told us

During our engagement work, you told us that the pandemic had given us an opportunity to make significant progress in the use of digital skills and technology, and you don't want us to lose momentum. You want to make sure that parts of the workforce aren't digitally excluded and you want us to make the most of opportunities to invest in infrastructure and a skills development programme.

Learning through digital platforms needs to be accessible, and bitesize learning opportunities help with this approach. It creates greater equity of access, as does the use of mobile technology. The message was clear that "one size doesn't fit all."

We've supported the sector in the shift to digital, through targeted increases in funding and by developing national learning modules to make sure content is consistent. More needs to be done, but it must reflect what the workforce needs, which varies as not everyone uses and accesses digital content in the same way. This was clear in the [Shift to digital learning](#) research the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) carried out for us in 2020.

### Our 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.

### Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026

13. Implement ways to enhance the digital literacy and confidence of the wider health and social care workforce in Wales.
14. Create opportunities to widen access [to digital learning and development](#).
15. Find out what digital skills are needed to implement new digital service models.

### How we'll measure progress against the actions

- We'll report on the digital literacy audit.
- We'll report on what actions are taken following the digital literacy audit.
- We'll report on the number of new e-learning modules that are developed and taken up by the social care workforce.

## Consultation questions

**Do you think the actions in this theme will support the ambition of the workforce strategy?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Unsure

**If not:**

**How can they be strengthened?**

Again, we reiterate for learning and training to be most effective, it must be paid and in work time.

The Welsh government's Union Learning Fund starts from knowledge that 'hard to reach' workers or those with lower essential skills are more likely to engage in learning with their trade union than with an employer.

We strongly suggest SCW works in partnership with trade unions to undertake a training needs analysis for care workers. This would be more effective in driving up standards.

**What actions need to be added?**

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**What do we need to consider when we implement the actions of this theme?**

-

**Any further comments?**

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## 5. Excellent education and learning

### What you told us

Making learning and development available to more people was a common theme in the feedback you gave us.

You told us that equality and inclusion was important for the current and future workforce, and we needed to:

- treat learning, development and CPD with the same level of importance as qualifications
- offer more opportunities for you to learn Welsh and improve your Welsh language skills.

Your feedback showed us how important it was to have clear career pathways linked to learning. It's important that it's easy for you to move from learning and developing skills that are job-specific to more formal qualifications.

This means we should consider the opportunities for “grow your own” development models, that give the current workforce the chance to learn while they earn.

This would address concerns about the financial pressures linked to learning, and the debt that can come with more traditional full-time learning programmes.

To professionalise the social care workforce, you felt you needed more support to grow the capacity of the sector to assess and educate for all vocational and professional pathways.

We've already made more support available regionally and locally through our Workforce Development Programme. This is both in terms of grant and non-grant elements of the programme, and focuses on sponsored places for the social work degree.

Along with increased bursaries from Welsh Government, we're trying to make the professional pathways more accessible and attractive to a wide range of learners, but we recognise more is needed.

We've carried out significant work to support the sector with the health and social care vocational qualifications that were introduced in 2019 and 2020, and in 2023 changes were made to how level 2 and level 3 are assessed. Further work is planned soon on level 4 and 5 qualifications.

We need to make the most of this investment to make sure we employ and retain social care staff in Wales, so we can:

- have a sustainable workforce for the future
- have routes into education and training that are attractive and accessible to our local population and communities.

## Our 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 people in Wales.

## Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026

16. Work with education providers to make sure education meets the needs of the health and social care system, and includes programmes offered in Welsh.
17. Continue to invest in increasing the numbers of health and social care professionals who are trained in Wales, with a focus on value.
18. Make it easier for people to start health and social care careers by removing barriers and developing the work-based learning model.
19. Develop ways of improving the workforce's skills and knowledge.

## How we'll measure progress against the actions

- We'll report on the percentage of the workforce with a required qualification and how many are working towards a required qualification.
- We'll report on the key metrics from the Social Care Wales Workforce Development Grant programme (SCWWDP)
- We'll report on the number of social work students who are sponsored and who have accessed the degree through vocational pathways.

## Consultation questions

**Do you think the actions in this theme will support the ambition of the workforce strategy?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Unsure

**If not:**

**How can they be strengthened?**

Please see our answer to the questions in the previous section.

**What actions need to be added?**

-

**What do we need to consider when we implement the actions of this theme?**

-

**Any further comments?**

-

## 6. Leadership and succession

### What you told us

In line with the workforce strategy, we worked with HEIW to agree [compassionate leadership principles](#) and a 'compassionate leadership behaviour compass', which explains how to create compassionate leaders and cultures in health and care.

All national leadership and development programmes for social care and social work managers and leaders are based on these principles.

It was refreshing to see there's universal support for the way we use and promote compassionate leadership. But, the workforce wants compassionate leadership roles to be modelled from top to bottom and space to use compassionate leadership, even in high pressure situations.

You also felt we need to focus on making a compassionate team culture that:

- reflects leadership values
- finds ways of rewarding people who don't want to become leaders or managers but want to remain in practice.

You told us that you thought developing the [Gwella site](#) was very positive, but it wasn't well known and needed to be marketed better. This would help make the most of it and create a culture of compassionate leadership and organisational development.

We also had a lot of strong feedback about the need for local workforce planning to include:

- succession planning
- the benefits of joint leadership development across health and social care
- thorough ways of mentoring new managers and leaders, focusing on well-being.

We know that social care organisations that practice and embed compassionate and collective leadership have a more engaged workforce, which leads to better health outcomes for people.

To have a strong social care service, we need to have compassionate leadership at all levels and professional groups.

### Our ambition by 2030

Leaders in the health and social care system will demonstrate collective and compassionate leadership.

## Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026

20. Create accessible leadership development resources and programmes for individuals and organisations, based on the compassionate leadership principles.
21. Develop a talent management pipeline for leadership roles.
22. Find ways to support services to develop and embed positive cultures.

## How we'll measure progress against the actions

- We'll report on how many people took part in leadership and management programmes, and how happy they were with the programmes.
- We'll share updates about new leadership programmes, including evaluation of initial delivery.

## Consultation questions

**Do you think the actions in this theme will support the ambition of the workforce strategy?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Unsure

**If not:**

**How can they be strengthened?**

Compassionate leadership should be a given in every workplace and will be present in successful organisations.

We would like SCW to go much further and promote the principles of social partnership working to all care employers, as the best way to engage with their workforce. This means all care employers recognising the value of trade unions and the benefits they can bring to businesses by promoting the voices of care workers in all decision making.

Of course, many private care employers are actively hostile to trade unions and attempt to prevent trade union recognition. We would like SCW to acknowledge such behaviour is a barrier to improving standards in the care sector.

**What actions need to be added?**

-

**What do we need to consider when we implement the actions of this theme?**

-

**Any further comments?**

-

## 7. Workforce supply and shape

### What you told us

Workforce planning should be a core function of workforce supply and demand based on service planning and modelling.

But, you felt that we don't understand our workforce well enough or have the data and intelligence that helps us to plan the workforce effectively. This includes being confident about predictions of how many people are needed to work in the sector in the future, when taking into account the expected growing demand for services.

You told us it isn't just about numbers, but about understanding what people can offer across sectors, including skills and capabilities, gaps and areas of duplication.

You felt that volunteers are an important part of workforce planning, and we need to be more inclusive of them. This includes providing learning and development opportunities and career pathways for volunteers where needed.

Our responses to workforce issues tend to be reactive, for example our recent work to better understand the significant increased use of agency workers.

But we know we need a clear and up-to-date picture of our current workforce, and to better understand why workers change employers or leave the sector.

We've started to get more current and detailed workforce data, but this is still a work in progress. We need to find ways to turn that data into something we can use when workforce planning locally, regionally and nationally.

This isn't just about employment. Better ways of workforce planning will help us decide how we commission education and learning opportunities, so we're not only able to recruit from an existing population, but also have enough people in the education system to meet future demands.

We know more people will need to use social care over the next 20 years, so it's essential we have effective workforce planning systems in place to meet this demand.

### Our ambition by 2030

We will have a sustainable workforce in sufficient numbers to meet the health and social care needs of our population.

### Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026

23. Build capacity and capability in workforce planning and development across health and social care, supported by a standardised approach.
24. Develop workforce responses for professionals and key parts of the sector.

25. Find out what a National Care Service would mean for the workforce.

## How we'll measure progress against the actions

- We'll publish workforce data annually, showing trends on the most important metrics.
- We'll give progress reports in line with workforce planning findings and recommendations.

## Consultation questions

**Do you think the actions in this theme will support the ambition of the workforce strategy?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

☒ Unsure

**If not:**

**How can they be strengthened?**

Significant investment is required to increase capacity to bring in more care workers.

As last year's Association for Public Service Excellent (APSE) report *National Care Service for Wales*, concluded, simply injecting more public money into care without removing commissioning and profit wouldn't significantly improve the employment conditions of care workers or quality of care for users.

This is because the economics of social care are entwined with real estate, and it would only work to drive up the value of care firms, making them more attractive to venture capitalists.

You can read the APSE report, commissioned by UNISON Cymru Wales, here: [APSE-report-A-National-Care-Service-for-Wales](#)

With regard to the question of what a National Care Service would mean for care workers? The best way to find out what it means for care workers, is to consult with trade unions. We are the voice of the workforce and we can facilitate this work.

The fastest way to address all the workforce problems alluded to by SCW, would be to establish a National Care Service that is directly and publicly delivered through local government.

**What actions need to be added?**

-

**What do we need to consider when we implement the actions of this theme?**

-

**Any further comments?**

-

## Effects of our changes

**1. 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?**

Please comment in the space below:

-

**2. What effects will our proposals have on people with protected characteristics, specifically on:**

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

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

Please comment in the space below:

-

## Appendix A

You can also [view this appendix as a web page](#).

# Social Care Wales delivery plan for 2023 to 2024, aligned to the ambition of the workforce strategy

**An engaged, motivated and healthy workforce**

**Our ambition by 2030**

The health and social care workforce will feel valued and supported wherever they work.

Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026	Social Care Wales delivery plan 2023 to 2024
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Support employers to embed workforce well-being in their organisations by implementing and refreshing <a href="#">the Health and well-being framework</a>.</li></ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to promote <a href="#">the Health and well-being framework</a> in social care and launch a digital version alongside the existing health and well-being resources. (National Workforce Implementation Plan)</li><li>• Evaluate the impact of the Health and well-being framework in social care, and use what we learn to refresh it. (NWIP)</li><li>• Implement the first year activities of the Employer Support Service.</li><li>• Consult and work with the sector to review the codes of professional practice and associated practice guidance and make sure these are still aligned to the Health and well-being framework.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and provide our response to Welsh Government priorities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ the <a href="#">Anti-Racist Wales Action</a></li> <li>◦ <a href="#">the LGBTQ+ Action plan</a></li> <li>◦ <a href="#">the HIV Action plan (Wales)</a></li> <li>◦ <a href="#">Mwy na geiriau.</a> (NWIP)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2. Work towards parity, fair reward and recognition through the <a href="#">Social Care Fair Work Forum</a> and WLGA led consideration of social work terms and conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Welsh Government work about fair reward and recognition across the social care workforce</li> <li>• Use what we learn from the review of terms and conditions for social workers to support implementation.</li> </ul>
3. Support workforce well-being by promoting and developing well-being resources and services, including <a href="#">Canopi</a> and the <a href="#">Care Worker Card</a> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote recognition for the workforce through a <a href="#">Care Worker Card</a>.</li> <li>• Support the promotion of <a href="#">Canopi</a>, the universal mental health support service. (NWIP)</li> </ul>
4. Maintain and develop peer support networks, communities and a national conference to share different ways of improving workforce well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold a joint well-being conference with HEIW. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Host a social work conference to share good practice and celebrate the profession.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to join and to build peer support networks in social care.</li> <li>• Support the provision of a range of communities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ practice educators</li> <li>◦ residential childcare</li> <li>◦ place-based care and support</li> <li>◦ Responsible Individuals</li> <li>◦ Approved Mental Health Professionals</li> <li>◦ Best Interest Assessors</li> <li>◦ newly qualified social workers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Hold the <a href="#">2023 Accolades Ceremony</a>.</li> </ul>
5. Carry out and research and engagement work, including an independent survey of registered workers, and use what we learn to improve our understanding of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse, publish and respond to the results of the first employee experience survey for social care staff and plan for future engagement. (NWIP)</li> </ul>

how to support workforce well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share with partners what we learned from the research into what motivates workers to become agency workers, explaining the next steps for us and our partners. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Carry out a review of the guidance for newly qualified social workers and first three years in practice guidance.</li> </ul>
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## Attraction and recruitment

### Our 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.

<b>Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026</b>	<b>Social Care Wales delivery plan 2023 to 2024</b>
6. Provide engagement structures for the sector, to support a co-ordinated approach to attract workers into social care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry on delivering a joint health and social care careers forum that promotes all roles and reaches out to all parts of the community and workforce. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Support and coordinate a representative attraction and recruitment stakeholder group.</li> </ul>
7. Develop and implement plans to continually promote social care as a career of choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry on delivering targeted attraction campaigns for significant shortages in professional and occupational groups, underrepresented groups and hard to recruit areas through our <a href="#">WeCare Wales</a> programme. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Develop an 'always on' approach to attraction and recruitment through social media platforms. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Carry out targeted campaigning to support the promotion of the social work profession as a career choice during Social Work Week</li> <li>• Carry out targeted campaigning to support apprenticeship take up</li> </ul>

	in the social care sector, including support for National Apprenticeship week. (NWIP)
8. Develop ways of widening access to careers in social care including pathways for volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue providing the <a href="#">Introduction to social care</a> pre-employment training programme, supporting people into roles in social care, including the new recharge programme.</li> <li>• Consult on and deliver changes to registration entry requirements for the social care workforce.</li> </ul>
9. Improve sector recruitment practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the implementation of a modern, values-based bilingual recruitment approach for all health and social care staff. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Develop a range of guidance to support employer practices, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ safer recruitment</li> <li>○ hybrid working</li> <li>○ flexible working approaches,</li> <li>○ values-based recruitment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Seamless workforce models

### Our ambition by 2030

Multi-professional and multi-agency workforce models will be the norm

Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026	Social Care Wales Delivery Plan 2023-2024
10. Implement initiatives to support working across health and social care boundaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the actions in the joint <a href="#">Strategic Mental Health Workforce Plan</a>. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Support HEIW to offer of nurse training to care home staff. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Support HEIW to develop routes into reablement training. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Support the development of a toolkit to support the role of trusted assessor. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Support the implementation of Welsh Government's forward policy agenda.</li> </ul>

11. Develop ways of supporting multi-professional working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the development of the community infrastructure programme multi-professional framework.</li> </ul>
12. Identify and respond to how new policy drivers and service models affect the workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and engage in regional workforce boards.</li> <li>Support government policy initiatives, including eliminating profit and increasing community capacity.</li> <li>Support national service model considerations, such as domiciliary care franchise.</li> </ul>

## Building a digitally ready workforce

### Our 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.

Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026	Social Care Wales Delivery Plan 2023-2024
13. Implement ways of enhancing the digital literacy and confidence of the wider health and social care workforce in Wales.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry on prioritising improving digital literacy and digital infrastructure in the workforce through the Social Care Wales Workforce Development Programme (SCWWDP) grant.</li> <li>Work with partners to develop a plan to support digital innovation in social care. (NWIP)</li> <li>Explore how we can carry out a digital skills audit of the social care workforce.</li> </ul>
14. Create opportunities to widen access to digital learning and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a digital platform so the social care workforce can easily access digital learning. (NWIP)</li> <li>Develop <a href="#">digital learning assets</a> and resources for the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>employer assessment route for health and social care</li> <li>outcome focused practice</li> <li>well-being</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ development/redesign of Welsh language resources</li> <li>○ hospital discharge. (NWIP)</li> </ul>
15. Find out what digital skills are needed to implement new digital service models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and engage in regional workforce boards.</li> <li>• Work with Health Technology Wales to find the most suitable technologies for implementation. (NWIP)</li> </ul>

## Excellent education and learning

### Our 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 people in Wales

<b>Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026</b>	<b>Social Care Wales delivery plan 2023 to 2024</b>
16. Work with education providers to make sure education meets the needs of the health and social care system, and includes programmes offered in Welsh.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support to employers and learning providers for the ongoing implementation of the health and social care vocational qualifications. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Create resources to support essentials skills training and testing in the social care sector.</li> </ul>
17. Continue to invest in increasing the numbers of health and social care professionals who are trained in Wales, with a focus on value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop post qualifying awards for social workers, in line with sector priorities and the agreed post qualifying framework.</li> <li>• Support the development of a medication management e-learning resource for social care workers. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Continue to provide funding to support sponsored places for the social work degree.</li> <li>• Continue to influence the value of bursaries for social work students. (NWIP)</li> </ul>
18. Make it easier for people to start careers in health and social care by removing barriers and developing the work-based learning model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widen access into health and social care careers by developing the work-based learning model and pathways into professional qualifying pathways. (NWIP)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support the provision of resources to support the workforce in working with unpaid carers.</li> </ul>
19. Develop ways of improving the workforce's skills and knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work alongside HEIW, social care providers and commissioners to embed comprehensive and ongoing LGBTQ+ specific health and social care training to all staff. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Provide all social workers with anti-racism training. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Develop and implement a skills framework for people working in social care research, innovation, and improvement.</li> <li>• Create a team of coaches to build relationships, confidence, and skills in innovation through coaching local teams.</li> <li>• Continue to support the understanding and application of strengths based practice across areas of social care statutory and non-statutory services, including through resources and training.</li> <li>• Continue to offer the collaborative skills communications skills programme to local authorities.</li> <li>• Continue to support the work of the Learning and Improvement Network for Reablement to share practice and explore workforce solutions.</li> </ul>

## Leadership and Succession

### Our Ambition By 2030

Leaders in the health and social care system will demonstrate collective and compassionate leadership

<b>Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026</b>	<b>Social Care Wales delivery plan 2023 to 2024</b>
20. Create accessible leadership development resources and programmes for individuals and organisations, based on the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver and evaluate a collective and compassionate senior leadership programme for local</li> </ul>

compassionate leadership principles.	<p>authorities and the voluntary sector. (NWIP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create resources on the social care pages of <a href="#">Gwella</a>. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Continue to promote, support, and review the team manager and middle manager development programmes.</li> <li>• Work with HEIW to promote compassionate leadership and the supporting <a href="#">joint principles</a>. (NWIP)</li> </ul>
21. Develop a talent management pipeline for leadership roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide and evaluate a pilot aspiring manager programme.</li> <li>• Scope the options for a joint mental health team manager development programme. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Explore the most effective ways of supporting diversity in social care leadership.</li> </ul>
22. Find ways to support services to develop and embed of positive cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with CIW to explore how to move ahead with support for embedding positive cultures.</li> </ul>

## Workforce Shape and Supply

### Our Ambition By 2030

We will have a sustainable workforce in sufficient numbers to meet the health and social care needs of our population.

<b>Workforce strategy actions 2023 to 2026</b>	<b>Social Care Wales delivery plan 2023 to 2024</b>
23. Build capacity and capability in workforce planning and development across health and social care, supported by a standardised approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the workforce planning scoping exercise and respond to the recommendations.</li> <li>• Build capacity and capability in workforce planning across health and social care, supported by a standardised approach, including ways of integrating workforce planning. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Continue to improve and bring together approaches to collecting and publishing workforce data across the social care sector.</li> <li>• Develop workforce planning guidance to identify and develop Welsh language skills in the</li> </ul>

	<p>health and social care workforce. (NWIP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support people with workforce insights offer by consolidating our workforce data.</li> <li>• Develop a good practice guide for exit interviews. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Continue to support the development of the <a href="#">Social Care Fair Work Forum's</a> Pay and Progression Framework.</li> </ul>
24. Develop workforce responses for professional and key parts of the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support ADSSC to develop an agency worker memorandum of cooperation.</li> <li>• Support the Welsh Government's Transformation of Children's Services programme of work, including the national practice framework.</li> <li>• Support the work of the Resourcefulness Communities Partnership to help develop and promote local initiatives that improves well-being in communities throughout Wales.</li> <li>• Explore the development of a model to support volunteering placements in social care settings. (NWIP)</li> <li>• Continue to support the work of the Carers Ministerial Advisory Group.</li> <li>• Review the <a href="#">Welsh Language skills in your workforce, using them effectively</a> toolkit to align with relevant legislation, reports, frameworks, and incentives and create a digital resource to support its use. (NWIP)</li> </ul>
25. Find out what a National Care Service would mean for the workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider and respond to the workforce implications of the <a href="#">National Care Service</a></li> </ul>

## How we'll 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.

## Contact details

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