

SCW Strategic Equality Plan – Public engagement Survey

1. Workforce

We support a diverse social care, early years and childcare workforce across Wales:

- around 65,000 registered social care professionals
- almost 83,000 people working in social care
- more than 16,000 working in early years and childcare.

Our goal is to make a positive difference to social care in Wales by building confidence in the workforce and driving continuous improvement. We do this by developing the knowledge and skills the workforce needs to protect, empower, and support those who use on care and support.

We want your views on our equality, diversity and inclusion priorities for the next four years and beyond.

3.What does an inclusive social care, early years and childcare workforce look like?

A workforce that actively includes people from all ages, classes, races, religions, national and gender identities. A workforce where those with physical and mental health conditions are supported and those with disabilities and neurodiverse conditions feel safe and welcome.

A workforce that is focused solely on and motivated by delivering excellent social care services for the public, not delivering profits for private employers

A workforce that is recruited ethically, free from coercion, and is protected from modern slavery when recruited from overseas. One where recruitment is done by human beings using their experience and judgement in the sector and where applicants are protected from risks of algorithmic and human bias.

A workforce free from the exploitation arising from the threat of loss of visa sponsorship and deportation by employers.

A workforce where solidarity and community cohesion is enhanced and where some groups of workers are not offered more hours than others because of visa requirements.

A workforce that is paid fairly, with the Real Living Wage as a minimum until a Fair Pay Agreement is negotiated, and employed ethically.

A workforce that is employed by providers who pay care workers fairly and transparently for all aspects of their work, including travel time between visits, waiting time, and mandatory training.

A workforce that knows that commissioners and regulators will ensure that not subject to financial exploitation, including the imposition of illegal fees.

A workforce that fair and secure working conditions, and where commissioners and regulators recognise the risks of insufficient hours and restrictive practices.

A workforce where commissioners and regulators support and ensure that providers in carrying out right-to-work checks accurately and lawfully.

A workforce where rights are maternity and paternity rights are upheld and protected for all workers, and workers are protected through pregnancy.

4.Are you familiar with our work to promote equality, diversity and inclusion in social care, early years and childcare?

Yes

2. Organisations

We want every person who needs care and support to live the life that matters to them. To achieve this, we work closely with people who use care services and a range of organisations.

We know positive cultures in organisations are essential for creating anti-discriminatory environments. As we develop our next strategic equality plan, we want you to tell us:

- how can we best support equality, diversity, and inclusion in organisations?
- what areas should we prioritise to help services embed positive, anti-discriminatory practices?

5. What does an equal, diverse and inclusive workplace look like in social care, early years and childcare?

A workplace where the profit motive is entirely removed and the public service ethos is enhanced.

A workplace where everyone is paid fairly so they can afford to live well, heat their homes and support their families.

A workplace where workers know their rights and how to realise them individually and collectively to protect themselves and their colleagues and improve their working conditions.

A workplace where workers are enabled and encouraged to come together in trade unions so they can have a voice in Fair Pay Agreement negotiations and where these trade unions are recognised by employers, with proper facilities time given to workplace reps and release for Union Learning Reps, Equalities Reps and Health & Safety Reps.

A workplace that promotes a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and discrimination, enabling confidential reporting by staff who experience this, and encouraging providers to implement policies that support staff well-being and fair working conditions, including engagement with trade unions.

A workplace where the design, development and implementation of digital technology, including automation, actively involves workers. A workplace where technology is used to enhance work and the autonomy and safety of workers rather than monitor or control workers lives, where technology does not replace people.

A workplace where digital technology does not interfere with relationships between workers and the people and families they care for, and where digital technology does not seek to replace human judgement or have the effect of reducing critical thinking and reflective practice amongst workers.

A workplace where critical mandatory training is delivered face-to-face in groups and on the job as standard and where e-learning does not degrade the quality of training or prevent the peer-to-peer learning that happens in person from taking place.

A workplace where people of all classes, nationalities, races, gender identities and sexual orientations are treated with respect and that is accessible to all, including those living with neurodiverse conditions, physical impairments, mental health disorders and long-term health conditions.

A workplace where people living with menopause and menstrual health problems are respected and accommodated with compassion and do not face discrimination.

A workplace that is resilient to the impacts of climate change and promotes wellbeing – cool in the summer, warm in the winter, safe from the risk of flooding and storm damage - with outdoor space that is accessible to all and provides the opportunity for connection to nature.

6. What aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion are currently working well in organisations?

Organisations that follow Social Care Wales' engagement with the Anti-racist Wales action plan and LGBTQ+ action plan, including via regional workforce partnership structures.

Organisations, particularly local authorities such as Cardiff City Council that adopt the UNISON Cymru Migrant Worker Charter.

We are aware that organisations who participate in trade-union led learning and enter into recognition agreements with trade unions work better on equality, diversity and inclusion.

7. What should we prioritise in 2027 to 2031 to support care services to develop equal, diverse and inclusive workplaces?

Aiding and promoting the unionisation of workplaces and union recognition to protect all workers and promote equality and diversity and fair work

Support sufficient funding for a £15 sectoral minimum wage and proper sick pay to encourage a broader range of people to enter and remain in the sector.

Combatting modern day slavery and exploitative recruitment and employment practices in the sector.

Build understanding across the sector of the potential risks to equality and diversity from automation and digitisation, including discrimination via the use of artificial intelligence in the recruitment process and algorithmic management of work.

Promoting equality in the workplace by monitoring the implementation of inclusive policy and procedure, including menopause-friendly workplaces, neurodiverse inclusive and anti-racist workplaces.

3. Our role in systems and leadership

We have a leadership role in social care in Wales and provide high quality information and data. We work with partner organisations to improve services in areas that have been agreed as a national priority.

8. What does an equal, diverse and inclusive social care, early years and childcare system look like in Wales?

A system that is integrated, properly funded and delivered by the public sector purely in the public interest and under democratic control.

This is the only way that quality services can be universally accessible to everyone in every community in Wales on an equitable basis when they need them most and that public funding is utilised efficiently, rather than taken out of the sector and out of Wales in corporate profits or by running complex commissioning processes.

It is also the only way to ensure that workers in the sector have access to their rights, to trade union representation, to collectively agreed policies and procedures and the training and support that creates the conditions for an equal, diverse and inclusive system.

This is how we will realise the long-standing cross-party ambition to achieve systemic change with a National Care and Support Service in Wales.

9. What work should we be doing with other organisations to make sure equality, diversity and inclusion is prioritised when developing social care, early years and childcare services?

In the first instance, SCW should be encouraging organisations to adopt the policies agreed at the Fair Work Forum on discipline and grievance, and to recognise unions using the template recognition agreement <https://www.gov.wales/social-care-workforce-partnership-model-policies-social-care-sector> . They should work together to ensure that the Pay and Progression framework is implemented as widely as possible in the sector <https://www.gov.wales/social-care-fair-work-forum-pay-and-progression-framework-2026>

10.What should we prioritise in 2027 to 2031 to support social care leaders to be able to put systems and services in place that are equal, diverse and inclusive?

Promote an understanding amongst management of Welsh social partnership mechanisms and the changes brought in under the Employment Rights Act

Explaining the role of trade unions and the benefits of engagement with the workforce through collective bargaining in the new Social Care Negotiating Body for Wales.

Promoting understanding of modern-day slavery and the mechanisms to combat it and other forms of exploitation of migrant labour in the sector, including UNISON's Migrant Worker Charter.

Leaders should not be cheerleaders for the tech sector. Provide opportunities and space for critical thinking around the implementation of digitalisation in the sector, particularly in relation to algorithmic recruitment and management/monitoring of workers and the people they support in services.

Promote an understanding of the role of social partnership with workers around change and service transformation. For example, it should be normal for a leader to say no to an “artificial intelligence” initiative suggested by even the biggest and most powerful software provider, and to be an informed and sceptical customer in a sector under pressure. That pressure makes social care particularly vulnerable to tech solutionism and companies that are looking for contracts and diverse sources of training data.

4. Our regulatory work

We are a regulator, which means we set standards for the social care workforce, making them accountable for their work. Most social care workers working in Wales must register with us.

To make sure registered social care workers have the skills, knowledge and character to do their work safely and effectively, we'll investigate concerns raised about them.

11.What does a fair regulatory system look like for people registered with us and for people using care and support in Wales?

A system that operates without delay, where decision making is clear and transparent, where learning from mistakes is encouraged, where workers are not scapegoated for the failures of management, where there is a presumption of innocence and where natural justice prevails, and decision making is a human not an algorithmic process.

A regulatory system that seeks to reduce instances of avoidable employee harm, which is where harm occurs to employees because of an identifiable and modifiable workplace cause, the future recurrence of which is avoidable by reasonable adaptation, subsequent adherence to and thoughtful implementation of a workplace process or policy (see [The last resort: reducing avoidable employee harm by improving the application of the disciplinary policy and process - PMC](#))

A regulatory system that identifies and understands the way that workloads, working conditions, pay, terms, conditions, management style and culture has a critical impact and influence on the workforce.

A system that recognises and takes account of inherent and systemic biases against women, Black, working-class, older, disabled and LGBT+ workers.

A regulatory system that does not inadvertently encourage overbearing or unnecessary monitoring and control of workers by management, with or without the aid of digital technology or algorithms.

12. What aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion are currently working well in our regulatory processes?

The Professional Services Unit in UNISON Centre has experience of and engages with the regulatory process and has not reported any significant issues directly related to equality, diversity and inclusion.

13. What should we prioritise in 2027 to 2031 to help make sure our regulatory processes are fair, equal, diverse and inclusive?

Ensuring decision making that is timely, clear and transparent.

Reducing avoidable employee harm during regulatory processes (see [The last resort: reducing avoidable employee harm by improving the application of the disciplinary policy and process - PMC](#))

Human decision making not algorithmic decision making.

Any other information

In your opinion, what would be the likely effects of the four equality priorities outlined above (workforce, organisations, systems and leadership and regulation) on the Welsh language? We are particularly interested in any likely effects on opportunities to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.

14. Do you think that there are opportunities to promote any positive effects to the Welsh language?

Extending opportunities to learn Welsh equally across the workforce is dependent upon the willingness and ability of employers to release staff to participate in learning in paid work time.

15. Do you think that there are opportunities to mitigate any adverse effects to the Welsh language?

16. Are there any other things we should think about when we develop our next strategic equality plan?

There should be a just transition for social care staff, especially in relation to climate adaptation measures in the sector. Women, LGBT+ workers, disabled workers and Black workers, older workers, low-paid and working-class workers all face increased and interrelated challenges when faced with increased temperatures, flooding and storms.

Consider the impact of climate change on the workforce, and how different groups of staff and service users are impacted in different ways and have varying capacities to adapt. For more information see the Climate Change Committee's Report [The just transition and climate change adaptation March 2022](#)