

# Professionalise Wales' social care workforce

## Top Line

The social care workforce remains undervalued and understaffed. There is a desperate need to improve the profile of social care and retain staff whilst reducing shortages. Urgent intervention is needed to stabilise and improve prospects for the social care workforce in Wales.

## Key Asks

We are calling for all political parties to commit to:

- prioritise social care in future budgeting;
- recognise the impacts of Covid-19 on third sector providers, and ensure a safety net is in place to support the sector in delivery;
- establish parity of pay between healthcare and social care workers;
- improve support and resources for carers, whilst in the profession and post, to ensure consistent and improved quality of care;
- revise the terms and conditions for social care and domiciliary workers to improve staff retention and the public profile of the sector;
- undertaking an inquiry into the consistency and quality of social care across Wales to limit the effects of the 'postcode lottery'.

## Stats

- In Wales last year, 75,741 adults aged 18+ were in receipt of life-changing social care
- 13% turnover rate in adult social care in 2019, which equates to 194 carers.
- 217 new staff members entered the social care workforce in 2019.
- The World Health Organisation estimates a projected worldwide shortfall of 18 million health workers by 2030
- It is estimated that 500,000 adults aged 18+ will have a limited long-term illness in Wales by 2035, and 312,000 adults aged 65+ will be unable to manage at least one self-care activity on their own.

## Context

Social Care Wales are responsible for the registering and data collection of social care workers in Wales and represent the workforce. The Welsh Government have outlined in several reports such as Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 that they want a social care approach that is preventative and proactive in delivery and care. This will ensure a population that is healthier, and able to contribute to the Welsh economy for longer.

'A Healthier Wales: Our Plan for Health and Social Care' was published by the Welsh Government in June 2018 in direct response to 'The Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care in Wales' which was published earlier in the year. This was in

response to increasing challenges in social care, such as staff retention, resources and recruitment. The review described the new challenges facing health and social care in Wales. This includes an ageing population, lifestyle changes, public expectations, new and emerging medical and digital technologies, rising costs in health and care expenditure, and shortages in social care workforce.

The World Health Organisation estimates a worldwide shortfall of 18 million health workers by 2030<sup>1</sup>. Despite the impacts of this being felt most strongly by lower income countries, they anticipate countries of all levels of socio-economic development will experience difficulties in the education, employment, deployment, retention, and performance of their workforce.

Since 2009, the funding for social care in Wales has been declining per capita<sup>2</sup>. Social care is therefore in a funding crisis, and many of its services are at breaking point. The legislative framework in Wales<sup>3</sup> focuses on early intervention and sustainability, which needs to be reinforced by adequate and substantive funding by Welsh Government. Effective prevention and early intervention need to be informed by a better understanding of what helps communities achieve well-being, and how the Welsh Government can encourage social care organisations to work collaboratively.

Wales is due a social care revolution – one that is person-centred, properly funded and celebrates its workforce. Funding for social care has been falling for over a decade in Wales, and this is leading to inconsistency across services, poor staff retention and inadequate and delayed care packages<sup>4</sup>.

## Background

Social care is a vital service, providing disabled people with the independence and autonomy to live their life how they choose. In Wales last year, 75,741 adults aged 18+ were in receipt of life-changing social care<sup>5</sup>. This integral service allows individuals to remain social, travel, and maintain their sense of individuality. Not only does social care aid disabled people with washing, eating, dressing and other essential tasks, it also ensures they stay connected to their communities and can remain active in society.

Like their NHS counterparts, social care staff work tirelessly to ensure their residents and patients receive the utmost quality of care. However, the social care workforce still remains undervalued, and understaffed. There is a desperate need to improve the profile of social care and retain staff whilst reducing shortages.

In 2018, the Senedd's Health, Social Care and Sport Committee commented in their inquiry, *'Caring for our future: An inquiry into the impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to carers'* that:

**“For so many that we heard from, the Act has failed to have any meaningful impact on their lives. Problems with assessments, inappropriate services and inconsistent information and advice have resulted in carers telling us that they feel forgotten about, undervalued and desperate.”<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> NHS Wales, Social Care Wales: A HEALTHIER WALES: OUR WORKFORCE STRATEGY FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE. 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Wales Public Services. 2017. A delicate balance? Health and Social Care spending in Wales

<sup>3</sup> Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Wales Public Services. 2017. A delicate balance? Health and Social Care spending in Wales

<sup>5</sup> Social Care Wales. 2019. <http://www.socialcaredata.wales/IAS/themes/demandforcareandsupportservices/adults/tabular?view-id=2212&geoid=1&subsetId=>

<sup>6</sup> Health, Social Care and Sport Committee: *Caring for our future An inquiry into the impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to carers*. 2019. Link: <https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld12887/cr-ld12887%20-e.pdf>

Staff turnover rates in Wales are still relatively high, which was calculated to be 13% in 2019<sup>7</sup>, equating to 194 carers leaving the profession. This is concerning when compared with those entering the social care workforce in the same year, which was calculated to be 217 new staff members. This also has a negative impact on individuals in receipt of social care, who cite relationships and continuity of carers as one of the most important elements of good quality social care<sup>8</sup>. With such a high turnover rate, and low retention levels, urgent intervention is needed to stabilise and improve prospects for the social care workforce in Wales.

It is estimated that 500,000 adults aged 18+ will have a limited long-term illness in Wales by 2035, and 312,000 adults aged 65+ will be unable to manage at least one self-care activity on their own<sup>9</sup>. To keep up with the increasing and persistent demand, the social care sector needs to be flexible, and adaptable to new changes and ways of working. The impacts of Covid-19 have further demonstrated the need for greater clarity for the sector and increasing pressures on staff to meet demand.

Leonard Cheshire conducted a survey into the impacts of Covid-19 on disabled people, and one of the key messages we identified was the fear of social care hours being cut due to shortages, and lack of funding<sup>10</sup>. Disabled people in Wales should not have anxiety relating to their provision of social care; even less so during a global pandemic. If Wales is to align with the goal of 'a healthier Wales' as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2016), then prioritisation of social care needs to be addressed.

Equally, The Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru in their 2018 – 2021 Strategy recommended that 'Social Care needs to be both a higher political and funding priority for Welsh Government'. The funding of social care will act as both a preventative and proactive solution to an ageing population in Wales.

<sup>7</sup> Social Worker Workforce Planning Report, 2018 - 2019. Link: [https://socialcare.wales/cms\\_assets/file-uploads/COM07000\\_Social\\_Worker\\_Workforce\\_Planning\\_2018\\_19\\_eng\\_Final.pdf](https://socialcare.wales/cms_assets/file-uploads/COM07000_Social_Worker_Workforce_Planning_2018_19_eng_Final.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Measuring the Mountain Report. 2019. Link: <http://mtm.wales/ckfinder/userfiles/files/MtM%20Final%20Report%20March%2019%202019.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Social Care Wales. 2019. Link: <http://www.socialcaredata.wales/IAS/themes/demandforcareandsupportservices/adults/tabular?viewId=2212&geoid=1&subsetId=>

<sup>10</sup> Covid-19 Survey carried out by Leonard Cheshire on a UK-wide basis during the crisis. It was answered by disabled people themselves and their carers. Findings to be published later in the year.