



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

# Social Care Fair Work Forum: position statement

This statement sets out the Social Care Fair Work Forum's vision for fair work in the social care sector.

**First published:** 16 March 2021

**Last updated:** 16 March 2021

# Contents

[Our vision](#)

[Our priorities](#)

[Further information](#)

“ It’s time for everyone in social care to benefit from fair work. ”

## Our vision: working in partnership

The Social Care Fair Work Forum has been established in social partnership bringing together government, employers and unions. The Forum is looking at how the definition of fair work should be applied for social care workers in Wales and will, through collective discussions between unions, employers and government, set out what good working practices should look like in social care.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the central role of social care in our society and the important role of front line care workers. Current commissioning arrangements tend to result in pay levels that remain at the statutory minimum rather than enabling uplifts to the Real Living Wage. Whilst we are aware that some providers already pay the Real Living Wage, the majority of people who work in the sector experience low pay and often variable contractual arrangements which conveys an impression that caring is not a role that is valued or one to aspire to.

There is growing evidence that improving pay, terms and conditions for care workers will benefit employers and people who receive care and support.

By enabling those who deliver social care to be regarded as professionals with a positive future, we can tackle recruitment and retention and underpin improved quality of care and support provision.

There is a clear moral case for improving terms and conditions in the sector. Those who care for our loved ones through the most difficult of times should not be amongst the least rewarded in our society.

Delivering improvements in terms and conditions will require stakeholders to

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work in partnership because the social care sector is complex with over one thousand separate services and employers. Aligning and enhancing terms and conditions will be a challenging exercise for all parties.

Our starting point in terms of fair reward will be front line workers in independent commissioned services but our work programme will have implications for the whole sector and therefore all stakeholders will have a role to play in implementing the Forum's recommendations.

## **Our priorities**

### **Fair reward: Tackling low pay in the commissioned independent sector**

The forum believes that the Real Living Wage should be the minimum pay received by social care workers.

The role of the forum is to establish a clear set of priorities for the sector and recommendations for how those priorities should be achieved. The forum considers this to be the most urgent priority in terms of improving working conditions in the sector. In terms of how it should be achieved, the forum recognises that this commitment will require a substantial injection of funding and that, due to the nature of the sector, this will need to come from the public purse. This is beyond the remit of the forum.

However, even with funding in place, ensuring that social care workers' pay is improved in both the short and longer term will also require joint effort on behalf of all stakeholders. The forum will provide a focus for that joint effort and will work to develop a shared understanding of the challenges to implementation of pay increases in the social care sector, and how these might be overcome.

## **Employee voice and collective representation: the forum's recommendations made collectively**

Having arrangements in place for employee voice and collective representation is of itself a substantive characteristic of fair work. It also provides a process which helps ensure fairness in the other areas.

As the tripartite social partnership group for social care, the Social Care Fair Work Forum is the first of its kind and could provide a unique model of collective bargaining for the independent sector. It's early priority will therefore be to determine how this model of collective bargaining could operate in conjunction with existing bargaining arrangements and how it will make, implement and communicate its recommendations.

It will identify the steps that should be taken to increase membership of representative organisations in the sector and to secure employee voice.

## **Opportunity for access growth and progression: a fair reward and recognition framework for the whole sector**

This year, the forum will begin to clarify what good practice should look like in relation to terms and conditions for those delivering social care and develop a related reward and recognition framework. This framework will be allied to training and development and, in the longer term, the forum believes this should be linked to pay progression. The forum is determined that the framework will provide a model of good practice that will support a clear and consistent career development pathway across the whole sector in Wales.

## **Safe, healthy and inclusive work environment: good**

## **practice on workplace safety**

The pandemic has thrown the spotlight on workplace safety and wellbeing. The forum has established a subgroup which will examine the extent to which social care workers have access to safe, healthy and inclusive working environments. The forum will consider evidence of the need for action in this area, whether further steps need to be taken to improve the working environment, and the extent to which worker voice might have a role to play in supporting a safe, healthy and inclusive working environment.

## **Security and flexibility**

The forum will seek to understand the impact on workers of non-guaranteed hours and the extent to which workers have knowledge of, and are able to access their rights.

## **Baseline research into the working lives of personal assistants in the social care sector**

The forum has identified a need to examine the role and experiences of personal assistants more closely. Given the lack of available evidence, we will commission research on the experiences of social care personal assistants in relation to fair work to support future consideration.

## **Further information**

**Social Care Fair Work Forum** was established in September 2020 following recommendation of Fair Work Wales Commission.

The forum is a social partnership group consisting of employers, employees, stakeholders and government on an equal basis.

The members are:

- Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru
- Care Forum Wales
- GMB
- National Provider Forum
- Royal College of Nursing
- Social Care Wales
- Trades Union Congress
- Unison
- Welsh Government
- Welsh Local Government Association.

Professor Rachel Ashworth, Dean and Head of Cardiff Business School has been appointed as the forum's Independent Chair.

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