

## WLGA update – WSLC June 2026

### 1. Sector Led Improvement

The WLGA continues to progress Sector Led Improvement (SLI), building on the integration of Data Cymru into the organisation and the ambition to bring together data, digital, policy and improvement activity into a more coordinated and coherent offer for councils. This integration represents a significant step forward, strengthening the sector's ability to support service improvement and deliver better outcomes through a more joined-up and holistic approach.

The development of SLI is underpinned by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, which places a strong emphasis on continuous improvement through mechanisms such as self-assessment and Panel Performance Assessments (PPAs). Within this framework, sector-led improvement remains central, with local government responsible for leading its own improvement activity, supported by the WLGA.

Recent progress has focused on aligning data, digital and improvement activity in practice. The integration of Data Cymru has enhanced the sector's ability to develop more robust benchmarking, improve the quality and consistency of performance data, and provide stronger analytical insight to support corporate improvement and PPAs. There is also growing alignment with wider transformation programmes, with initiatives such as DiSC demonstrating how a coordinated, sector-led approach can support shared challenges and reduce duplication.

Governance arrangements for SLI are now established, with the Sector Led Improvement Board providing political oversight and strategic direction. Since its formation, the Board has begun to shape the emerging SLI framework, including developing guiding principles, clarifying roles and expectations, and informing how work programmes are prioritised and aligned for maximum impact.

Alongside this, operational progress is being made as teams work more closely across data, digital and improvement functions. Early collaboration has supported the identification of shared priorities and more consistent approaches to delivery, reflecting a shift towards a more integrated and structured model.

Looking ahead, the 2026/27 work programme will include a range of existing commitments, alongside opportunities to refine ways of working and strengthen alignment with SLI principles. This includes improving approaches to performance monitoring, outcome tracking and benefits realisation, supporting a more evidence-based and outcome-focused approach to improvement. Overall, progress to date provides a strong foundation for developing a more effective, sustainable and sector-led model of improvement across Welsh local government.

For further information, please contact [digitalteam@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:digitalteam@wlga.gov.uk).

## **2. National resident survey**

Seventeen councils have now delivered the National Resident Survey, with Cardiff and Carmarthenshire continuing to provide their own survey data for benchmarking purposes.

Building on progress to date, it has been agreed with councils that the delivery of the survey will be aligned from September 2027 onwards. Under this approach, all councils will open their survey in mid-September and deliver it on a biennial basis. While councils will retain the flexibility to run the survey annually if they wish, participation in the aligned September delivery in odd-numbered years will be expected. This alignment will improve national consistency, reduce duplication of effort and resources, and create greater opportunities for shared learning around engagement and promotion approaches.

At present, it is anticipated that a small number of councils may choose to run the survey in both 2026 and 2027, though final details are still being confirmed with participating authorities.

Work is also underway to enhance access to the NRS dashboard. This will enable a wider group of council officers and elected members to view disclosure-controlled headline results directly, including data at local authority level and, where appropriate, at ward level. Improving access in this way will support more timely and consistent use of survey findings, while reducing the administrative burden on NRS leads who currently extract and share this information manually. This shift is expected to allow officers to focus more on interpretation and the development of public-facing outputs.

The WLGA has been working closely with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office to review and strengthen the Welsh language questions included within the survey's demographic section. Four revised questions have been agreed, in discussion with Welsh Government colleagues, and will be introduced from the 2026 survey onwards. These updates will provide more robust and comparable data on Welsh language ability and use, enabling closer alignment with national datasets such as the National Survey for Wales and the Annual Population Survey. This will support councils in developing local Welsh language strategies while also creating additional opportunities to promote the survey with support from Welsh Language Commissioner colleagues.

In addition, an enhanced Welsh language module is being explored as part of the NRS offer. This optional module would provide more detailed insight beyond the core demographic questions and is intended to support both statutory reporting requirements and wider Welsh language promotion activity at a local level. Work is currently at an early scoping stage, with plans to engage Welsh Language officers across councils to assess demand and co-develop the approach. Subject to appetite, this could be aligned with the nationally coordinated survey from 2027.

Finally, the WLGA is exploring the introduction of dynamic narrative text within the dashboard to support the reporting and publication of survey findings. This would provide automatically generated, quality-assured explanations of key results at a

council level, improving accessibility for non-technical audiences and helping ensure greater consistency in how findings are interpreted and communicated. While this approach is still under consideration, it has the potential to significantly reduce reporting burdens for NRS leads and may be introduced alongside the 2027 aligned survey.

For further information, please contact [Brenna Organ](#).

### **3. *Foster Wales***

The WLGA has been working closely with colleagues from Foster Wales to strengthen the processing, collation and preparation of their monthly data returns, with a focus on improving efficiency, data quality and consistency.

A dedicated Excel workbook has been developed using Microsoft Power Query to automate the collation of monthly submissions. This includes a consolidated dataset combining the latest returns with historical data, alongside a flagging mechanism to identify changes from previous submissions—addressing a specific challenge highlighted by Foster Wales. The workbook updates automatically when source files are refreshed, reducing manual handling and minimising the risk of error.

In addition, a suite of tailored analytical tables has been developed to support Foster Wales' reporting requirements. These outputs significantly reduce the level of manual effort required each month, enabling reporting to be updated efficiently through a simple refresh process.

Alongside these developments, work is underway to create a Power BI dashboard to support improved visualisation and interaction with the data. This will provide a more flexible and accessible way to explore trends, support internal decision-making, and enhance the presentation of data for stakeholders.

For further information, please contact [Brenna Organ](#).

### **4. *Council Data Audit***

The WLGA is progressing its Council Data Audit project, which is exploring the burden and effectiveness of statutory, regulatory and other required data reporting across Welsh councils. The current phase focuses on Social Care, Education and Planning, with the intention to extend the approach to additional policy areas over time.

This work responds to ongoing feedback from councils that data reporting requirements can be resource-intensive, often involving manual processes or duplication of effort. There is also variability in the extent to which collected data is made available to councils, and how effectively it is used once collected.

To better understand these challenges, user research has been carried out during April and May, with engagement from 14 of the 22 councils. Through this work, insights have been gathered into the range of reporting responsibilities councils manage, as well as the lived experience of officers involved in data collection, data handling and submission.

In June, the WLGA intends to publish two key outputs. The first is a Data Return “Catalogue”, providing a structured overview of council reporting requirements across the three priority areas, including key information on purpose, frequency and data use. The second is a findings report, setting out the insights gathered through user research alongside recommendations to support future improvement activity.

Together, these outputs will provide a clearer picture of the current data reporting landscape and help identify opportunities to reduce burden, improve consistency and maximise the value of data collected across Welsh local government.

For further information, please contact [Rob Pascoe](#).

## **5. Benchmarking Wales**

**Workforce benchmarking:** The latest open workforce data is now available. We are expecting revisions to the data from 2 Local Authorities. A full headlines report will be available in the coming weeks.

For further information, please contact [Ana Harries](#).

## **6. Self-Assessment Performance dataset (SAPD) Communities of Practice**

The [SAPD tool](#) is a resource for Welsh Council’s to access a standardised set of performance data that allows them to understand how they are performing against their objectives and how this compares to others. The dataset brings together a range of data from multiple reliable sources to allow users to access, interrogate and understand their performance. The tool is refreshed weekly and continues to be updated to include new and relevant data. For example, planning services data and sickness data have recently been made available in the tool.

The work to develop a “Corporate view” within the SAPD tool has been completed. This development is being led by the Welsh Council’s Performance Information Community of Practice (WCPI CoP), more information on the CoP can be found below.

For further information, please contact [Ana Harries](#).

## **7. Welsh Council’s Performance Information Community of Practice (WCPI CoP)**

The WCPI CoP brings together policy and data leads from Welsh Council’s to strengthen the quality, consistency, and strategic value of performance information shared with senior leaders.

- The National Outcomes Guidance developed in collaboration with the CoP, and the Service User Feedback Guidance (available) which provide a shared reference point and consistent approach for developing outcomes frameworks, have now been made available on the CoP’s Knowledge Hub. If you would like to see a copy please sign-up or contact Ana Harries (details below).
- Next phase: develop **new outcome measures**, subject to senior leadership sign-off.

- Training is being developed to help Local Authorities embed these outcome measures in their work and will be made available in the coming months.

For further information, please contact [Ana Harries](#).

### **8. Education (Emerging Work Programme)**

The WLGA is beginning to scope an emerging programme of work focused on education, with an initial emphasis on discovery and information gathering. This early phase is intended to build a clearer understanding of current challenges and support needs across councils, rather than to define or implement specific solutions at this stage.

The work will focus specifically on the role of local authorities in supporting schools, rather than on school-level delivery itself. Initial engagement will involve direct conversations with councils to explore operational “pain points” and pressures within education support services, including how data and intelligence are used to support schools requiring additional intervention.

This is expected to include consideration of areas such as local authority tracking and oversight, data flows, and the use of information to inform decision-making and support improved outcomes. As part of this, the programme will also include a focus on Additional Learning Needs (ALN), particularly in relation to how councils manage and utilise their data within this area.

At this stage, the work is part of a developing pipeline of activity, with further scope and priorities to be shaped through engagement with councils over the coming months. The approach will be to work with colleagues who are well placed to contribute to this work, particularly those with strong operational insight into education support services.

As part of this, expressions of interest will be invited to help shape the direction of the programme at an early stage and ensure alignment with existing activity.

For further information, please contact [Sheena Thomas](#).

### **9. LINC Project (Single View of a Child)**

The WLGA continues to support the development of the LINC project, which is focused on creating a single view of the child by bringing together data from multiple services to support better and safer decision-making within social care.

The project is being led by Carmarthenshire Council, working in partnership with Pembrokeshire Council and a range of data contributors. It brings together datasets from across social care, child wellbeing, education, police and health, providing practitioners with a more comprehensive understanding of risk, need and emerging issues.

The solution is being delivered through a dashboard interface using Power BI, enabling social workers and practitioners to explore linked data and identify patterns that may require intervention. The dashboard is currently in place using test data, with plans to transition to live data once the necessary approvals are secured.

A significant area of focus to date has been the development and agreement of data sharing arrangements, including Data Processing Agreements and indemnity clauses. This has required considerable time and coordination, reflecting broader challenges across the sector in enabling effective and timely data sharing.

The data is hosted via Swansea University as the cloud provider, supporting a secure and scalable approach separate from the SAIL databank.

Looking ahead, future phases of the project are expected to explore the use of AI to support early identification of trends and potential risks. The WLGA's role includes providing funding oversight, supporting coordination across partners, and connecting the project with wider related initiatives and organisations across Wales.

For further information, please contact [Matthew Evans](#).

### **10. Bangor University (Welsh Language AI Model)**

The WLGA has been working collaboratively with Bangor University and councils to support the development of a bilingual Welsh/English AI language model, using real-world Welsh speech to improve performance and accuracy.

The model has been trained to better reflect regional dialects and language use, with a particular focus on Welsh as used in local government contexts. As an open-source model, it offers opportunities for wider access and reuse across Wales, supporting innovation and collaboration in Welsh language technology.

Initial work focused on collecting authentic Welsh language speech recordings from council staff to strengthen the model's training data. More recently, efforts have shifted towards securing access to larger existing Welsh language audio datasets held across councils, further enhancing the depth and quality of the model.

Bangor University has now gathered a substantial volume of training material, alongside support from student interns who have undertaken Welsh to English translation work to support model development. The project aligns closely with Welsh Government priorities, including Cymraeg 2050, and contributes to the wider ambition of increasing the use of Welsh in digital services.

Learning from the project has been shared with councils, including practical insights into training AI models, data quality considerations and approaches to error correction, helping to build capability across the sector.

While the formal project is not continuing in its current form this year, Bangor University remains engaged through DiSC and related digital and data initiatives, enabling continued collaboration and knowledge sharing as the work evolves.

For further information, please contact [Matthew Evans](#).

### **11. DiSC (Digital in Social Care)**

The WLGA continues to support the development of DiSC (Digital in Social Care) Cymru, a national partnership designed to strengthen the use of digital, data and technology across social care in Wales. DiSC brings together organisations involved

in delivering and supporting social care, providing a coordinated approach to improving outcomes for people, families, carers and the workforce.

DiSC has emerged from a shared recognition across the sector that, while there is significant positive activity already underway, it can be fragmented and difficult to scale. The partnership provides a structure to bring together the different elements required for effective digital transformation, helping organisations to collaborate, share learning, and make better use of existing work and investment.

It is not a single programme or system, but a way of aligning activity across organisations and programmes to support a more joined-up and sustainable approach. DiSC is structured around four interconnected pillars: Big Change, focused on system-wide transformation; Brilliant Basics, strengthening core foundations such as data, skills and processes; Bright Ideas, supporting innovation and experimentation; and Building Knowledge, enabling the sharing of learning and good practice across the sector.

Data is a central component of the DiSC programme, particularly within the Brilliant Basics pillar. Activity is beginning to take shape around improving understanding, quality and use of local authority data through the “Know Your Data” approach. This reflects the wider recognition that effective digital transformation extends beyond IT systems and depends on how data is captured, shared and used to support decision-making.

Work relating to data standards is also developing as part of this agenda. While requirements are still being explored, there is a clear need for greater consistency to support security, integration and interoperability across systems and services. This work aligns with existing programmes and connects to wider activity, including the Council Data Audit.

Through DiSC, organisations are supported to reduce duplication, improve data sharing, and make better use of collective insight, while maintaining flexibility to deliver against local priorities. The partnership also provides access to shared tools, research, and opportunities to participate in collaborative projects and national programmes of work.

As the framework continues to develop, engagement with councils and partners will be key to shaping priorities and ensuring alignment with existing activity.

For further information, please contact [Emma Willis](#).

## ***12. Connecting Care – Data and Process Standardisation***

The Connecting Care Social Care Programme (CCSCP) is progressing a major work stream focused on data and process standardisation across social care in Wales. Delivered in partnership with Social Care Wales and sitting within the DiSC Cymru partnership, this work aims to build a common foundation that benefits every practitioner on the front line.

Today, without agreed data standards, each local authority records, shares, and reports information differently. This creates duplication and rework for practitioners,

barriers to sharing data between systems, inconsistent statutory reporting, and an inability to benchmark or compare nationally. The programme is addressing this by developing Minimum Operating Data Standards (MODS), a shared language that defines the minimum data everyone must capture and what it means. Crucially, these standards enable consistency without constraining local professional judgement or service delivery models.

For social care practitioners, the benefits are practical and tangible. Standardised data capture will reduce administrative burden, cutting the re-keying and reformatting of information that currently takes time away from the people they support. Co-designed practice guidance will help social workers record data accurately and completely, with a clear focus on better outcomes for the people they work with. Training and CPD opportunities will build confidence in using new systems like Mosaic and Eclipse as genuine enablers of outcomes-based practice, and dedicated resources will support practitioners in using data as a day-to-day decision-making tool.

The programme is also establishing robust information governance guidance so that practitioners and the public can be confident that data sharing is safe, lawful, and transparent. As we look forward, these efforts are establishing a vital foundation for integrated care capabilities spanning both health and social care systems.

For further information, please contact [Paul Owens](#).

## Capacity building: Training and webinars

### 13. *Open training programme*

Are you looking to learn more about collecting and using data? Do you work with data and want to extract more value from it? Are you thinking of expanding your skills?

We have a suite of training courses that will **introduce** you to:

- Summary statistics;
- Presenting data;
- Survey design and analysis;
- Planning and delivering focus groups;
- Data 101;
- Performance data; and
- **Our two brand-new training courses:**
  - Understanding Power BI dashboards
  - Beginner's guide to Microsoft Excel

***From data to dashboard: An introduction to Power BI visuals and dashboards*** will show you how to investigate and interrogate Power BI dashboards to get the most out of your data and make data driven decisions.

***A beginner's guide to using Microsoft Excel (Excel)*** gives practical advice and guidance to anyone who wants an introduction to, or a refresher of, Excel. It:

- outlines why Excel is useful
- introduces you to the Excel interface
- provides practical guidance on how to perform basic formulas and functions
- guides you through some of the key features
- contains a glossary of terms

We have published training guides available on our [website](#).

We run each of our training courses online every quarter where local council colleagues can register to attend for **free**. Other organisations can attend at a cost of £50 plus vat per person, per session.

We are now able to offer both English and Welsh language sessions.

To find out more and to book a place on one of our open sessions, please visit [TicketSource](#).

Alternatively, for a small cost, we can provide training courses specifically for your organisation, online or in person, at a time and date that suits you.

If you'd like to discuss your requirements, then please get in contact with [Róisín Roberts](#).

#### ***14. 'Inform and Inspire' webinar programme***

We host regular webinars as part of our 'inform and Inspire' webinar programme. For more information and to book tickets, please visit [TicketSource](#).

Recordings of our previous webinars can be found on our [website](#).

We are always looking for webinar content. If you have seen, done, or are doing something interesting, innovative and inspiring with data we'd love to hear about it – successful or otherwise. Equally, we'd love to hear your suggestions for future data, statistics or research topics you would you like to learn more about.

For further information, please contact [Suzanne Draper](#).