



Newid Cadarnhaol mewn
Gofal Cymdeithasol
Positive Change
in Social Care



Llywodraeth Cymru
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Welsh Government
National Office for Care and Support

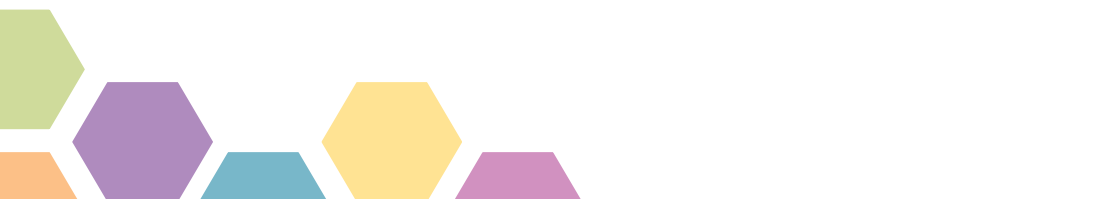


National Care Service Programme for Wales:

Working together for better care and support

Contents

Introduction – Social care supports us all	3
Why we need to act now	4
Social care benefits everyone	5
Investing in social care is investing in Wales	6
Our vision for a National Care Service	7
What could this mean for you?	10
Foundations of a stronger social care system	11
What success will look like	12
Strong social care supporting seamless care and support	14
Shaping care and support together	15
Appendix	16



Introduction – Social care supports us all

Social care is something that affects all of us. Whether we need support ourselves, care for a loved one, or work in health and care services, strong social care helps people to live well, stay independent and remain connected to their communities.

Social care is fundamental to a fairer, healthier and more compassionate Wales. It helps people of all ages live independently, stay connected to their communities and achieve what matters most to them. From supporting children and families, disabled people and unpaid carers, to helping older people live well for longer, social care touches lives in every community across Wales.

Most of us will need care and support at some point in our lives or know someone who does. Yet for too long, social care has not received the recognition it deserves despite the essential role it plays in helping people to stay well, supporting wellbeing, promoting independence and helping people live fulfilling lives. Across Wales, a skilled and dedicated workforce delivers high-quality, person-centred support every day, making a positive difference to individuals, families and communities.

Our vision is for a people-first National Care Service that strengthens the delivery of social care across Wales, ensuring everyone can access high-quality, joined-up care and support wherever they live, helping people stay independent, safe and well and reducing inequalities in outcomes and experience.

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The social care system has for too long been undervalued.

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Delyth Jewell MS, Deputy Minister for Social Care, Mental Health and Women's Health

The Welsh Government is committed to changing that. Our ambition is to strengthen social care as a valued public service and to build a more seamless, integrated system of

health and care to support delivery of our Integrated Community Care System that focuses on keeping people well, preventing crisis and delivering support closer to home. This plan sets out how we will take forward that vision through stronger national leadership, accountability, greater consistency, investment in our workforce and a renewed focus on prevention, community support and what matters to people.



Why we need to act now

Wales is changing. People are living longer, more people are living with complex health and care needs, and more families are balancing work, family life and caring responsibilities. To meet these challenges, we need a care and support system that is sustainable, equitable and fit for the future.

Strong social care is essential to the future of Wales. It helps people remain independent, strengthens communities and reduces pressure on our NHS. It is also an important economic sector, providing employment in communities across Wales and enabling more people to participate in work and community life.

This programme is part of our wider ambition to create a stronger, more integrated approach to health and care in Wales and sets out the actions we will take during this Senedd term to strengthen social care.

It builds on our commitment to a National Care Service that is shaped by Welsh values, centred on people and communities, and designed to ensure everyone can access the support they need with dignity, fairness and confidence.

By delivering change now and investing in long-term reform, we will help ensure everyone can access the support they need to live well and independently.



Social care benefits everyone

Social care is not only vital to people's wellbeing, but also to Wales' future. Every day, it creates value for individuals, communities and the wider economy by:

- **Supporting jobs and communities:**

Social care provides thousands of skilled jobs across Wales, helping local communities thrive and strengthening local economies.

- **Helping people stay in work:**

Good care and support enables family members to balance caring responsibilities with work and everyday life.

- **Supporting unpaid carers** is central to the future of social care. Supporting carers to maintain their wellbeing, employment and family life will be essential to creating a sustainable care system.

- **Promoting independence and wellbeing:**

By helping people to live well, stay active and remain connected to their communities, social care improves quality of life and prevents problems from escalating.

- **Supporting our NHS:** Strong social care helps prevent crises, reduces unnecessary hospital admissions and supports people to return home safely and sooner.



Investing in social care is investing in Wales

Social care is an investment as well as a public service. When we invest in social care, we invest in healthier communities, a stronger workforce and a more sustainable social care and health system. It is one of Wales' most important public services, delivering social, economic and wellbeing benefits that are felt across the whole nation.



What difference will this make?

Our vision is for everyone in Wales to be able to access high-quality care and support that helps them live independently, stay connected to their communities and achieve what matters to them, regardless of where they live or their circumstances.

The National Care Service Programme turns our vision into action, strengthening social care across Wales through practical improvements that people will see and experience in their everyday lives.

Our commitment is to deliver more consistent, high-quality care and support, strengthen the social care workforce, and make it easier for people to access the help they need.

This means people should find it easier to get the right support at the right time, have greater confidence in the services they receive and experience more joined-up care and support wherever they live in Wales. People's experiences of social care should not depend on where they live. The National Care Service Programme will help reduce unnecessary variation, improve consistency and ensure good practice is shared across Wales.

Together, these changes will help create a fairer, more sustainable social care system that improves outcomes for people, families and communities.

To support this, we will take forward a number of practical national initiatives.

These include:

- a National Social Care Academy to help attract, develop and retain a skilled workforce
- fair pay ambitions for social care workers
- the Stronger Safeguarding for a Safer Wales programme
- strengthened national intelligence and market oversight arrangements
- a new National Strategy for Unpaid Carers.



What this means

This is about strengthening social care across Wales while building on the strengths already in our communities. The National Care Service Programme will support stronger national leadership, accountability and greater consistency across Wales, while care and support services continue to be delivered locally and shaped by the needs of communities.

It will mean:

- more equitable and reliable access to care and support wherever people live
- stronger national leadership and clearer standards
- better integration between health and social care
- greater support for prevention, wellbeing and independence
- a stronger and more valued social care workforce.

What will stay the same

Services will continue to be delivered locally, shaped by the needs of communities and the people who use them. The National Care Service Programme is not about creating a one-size-fits-all model. It is about supporting greater consistency across Wales while building on local expertise, relationships and knowledge of communities. National means that people should be able to expect more consistent care and support, high standards and fair access wherever they live in Wales, while services remain locally delivered and shaped by local needs.

Change will happen over time, with local services continuing to play a central role in supporting people and communities.



What could this mean for you?

If you are a parent

Getting the right help at the right time, with services working better together to support children and families.

If you are an unpaid carer

Better recognition, improved support and more opportunities to take a break when you need one. A new National Strategy for Unpaid Carers will set out how we will strengthen support and recognise the vital contribution unpaid carers make.

If you are disabled or living with a long-term condition

More personalised support that helps you live independently and achieve what matters to you.

If you are an older person

Support to stay independent, connected to your community and in control of your life for longer.

If you work in social care

Greater recognition for the vital work you do, with better support, clearer career pathways and more opportunities to develop your skills.

If you live in Wales

A stronger, fairer, easily understood social care system that people can rely on if they, a family member or a friend ever need support. It helps people to live well, supports families and communities, and works more closely with the NHS to improve outcomes for everyone.



Foundations of a stronger social care system

This programme is structured around six foundations:

**1**

Clear national leadership and accountability

One system with clear authority for delivering consistent, high-quality social care.

**2**

Fair funding and reliable care

Carry out detailed modelling to understand how changes to care charging could affect people, local authorities and care services, including both home-based care and residential care.

**3**

A valued and sustainable workforce

A skilled, supported workforce with the capacity to deliver excellent care.

**4**

Data, digital and outcomes

Better use of data and technology to improve care, transparency and decision-making.

**5**

Prevention, safeguarding and strong communities

Supporting people earlier, keeping them safe, and building resilient communities.

**6**

Seamless social care and support

A strong social care to support integration.

Together, these six foundations set out how we will strengthen social care, support the workforce, improve people's experiences and create a more sustainable system for the future.

What success will look like

Success means that, wherever people live in Wales, they can access high-quality care and support that helps them live well, stay independent and achieve what matters to them.

Through this programme, we want to see:

- **More consistent care and support across Wales**, reducing differences in people's experiences and access to services.
- **Better outcomes for people and communities**, with support that improves wellbeing, independence and quality of life.
- **Stronger support for unpaid carers**, recognising the vital role they play and helping them balance caring with their own wellbeing, family life and work.
- **A stronger focus on prevention**, helping people stay well for longer and reducing the need for crisis intervention.

- **Improved safeguarding and protection**, ensuring people are safe, supported and treated with dignity and respect.
- **Better integration between health and social care** to support the delivery of our Integrated Community Care System, making services easier to access and more joined up around people's needs.
- **A valued and skilled social care workforce**, with greater recognition, development opportunities and support.
- **Fairer and more equitable access to care and support**, so people can access the help they need, when and where they need it.
- **Stronger communities**, where people are supported to remain connected, active and independent for as long as possible.
- **A sustainable social care system for the future**, with strong national leadership, effective local delivery and services that can meet changing needs over the years ahead.



In addition, we will build a social care system that reflects the values of modern Wales.

- **Welsh language services:**

We will support people to receive care and support in Welsh when they need it, helping ensure language is an integral part of quality care.

- **An anti-racist Wales:**

We will work to make care and support fair, inclusive and accessible for everyone, tackling inequalities and ensuring people's voices and experiences help shape services.

- **Keeping people safe:**

Safeguarding will remain at the heart of care and support, helping ensure people are protected from harm, treated with dignity and supported to live safe, independent lives.

- **Responding to climate change:**

We will support a more sustainable care system that is resilient to the impacts of climate change, strengthens local communities and helps protect the wellbeing of current and future generations.

Together, these commitments will help create a social care system that is **person-centred, inclusive, safe, sustainable and built around the needs of the people of Wales.**



Strong social care supporting seamless care and support

People do not experience their lives through separate organisations and services. As part of our ambition to deliver an Integrated Community Care System for the people of Wales, strengthening social care and supporting closer working with health services will make accessing support simpler, more joined up and more focused on what matters to people. Services should work together around people's needs, reducing unnecessary hand-offs and making it easier for people to access the right support.

This will help to improve outcomes and help people to live well, independently and with dignity.



Shaping care and support together

The future of social care in Wales should be shaped with people, not simply for people. We want to hear from people who use care and support, unpaid carers, families, care workers, providers and communities across Wales.

Your experiences, ideas and expertise will help shape the future of social care and support, ensuring that improvements are grounded in what matters most to people and communities.

This programme marks the start of an ongoing conversation about the future of social care in Wales. Where appropriate, we will undertake consultation and engagement on future policy developments.

As the programme develops, we will continue to work with people who use care and support, unpaid carers, people with lived and living experience, the workforce and partners to shape future proposals.



These areas deserve more attention and prominence. They deserve a voice in the heart of government.



Delyth Jewell MS, Deputy Minister for Social Care, Mental Health and Women's Health.

Leading the change

The **National Office for Care and Support** is leading the delivery of this programme, working with people, families, communities and partners across Wales to help shape the future of social care.

By providing national leadership, supporting improvement and promoting greater consistency across Wales, the National Office will help ensure that people can access high-quality care and support wherever they live.

The voices, experiences and ideas of people who use care and support, unpaid carers and the social care workforce will be at the heart of this work. By listening to what matters to people and working together to deliver change, the National Office will help strengthen national leadership, improve consistency and support high-quality care and support across Wales. Its focus is simple: ensuring people can access the right support, at the right time, in the right place, while helping everyone live well, independently and with dignity.

Looking ahead

The journey towards a National Care Service for Wales will take time, but by working together we can create a fairer, stronger and more sustainable system of care and support for future generations. This National Care Service Programme sets out the first steps on our journey.



Appendix

Activity that we will undertake



1

Clear national leadership and accountability

One system with clear authority for delivering consistent, high quality social care.

How we will improve social care

- Stronger national leadership and a stronger voice for social care.
- Fairer, more consistent and easier access to care and support.
- Care and support that are available when people need them.
- A sustainable care and support system for the future.
- More joined-up care and support across Wales.

Activity
Create strong national leadership
Lead national conversations on the future of social care.
Bring together social care leaders and partners to shape improvements.
Work closely with partners across the sector to ensure social care reform is developed and delivered collaboratively.
Maintain independent advice and challenge through the National Office's Strategic Advisory Group.
Establish a Social Care Champion within Llais to help strengthen the voice of people who use care and support.
Work with partners to hold conversations with citizens, carers and communities so that future changes are shaped by people's experiences.

Activity

Work in partnership to improve perceptions and understanding of social care.

Deliver the Stronger Safeguarding for a Safer Wales programme to improve how children and adults at risk are protected.

Consistent national standards

Develop consistent national approaches to commissioning and data.

Expected outcomes

- Greater public understanding of social care and its workforce.
- More consistent social care services across Wales.
- Clearer accountability and stronger delivery.
- National solutions co-produced with citizens and partners.





2

Fair funding and reliable care

Carry out detailed modelling to understand how changes to care charging could affect people, local authorities and care services, including both home-based care and residential care.

How we will improve social care

- Develop a sustainable funding system that supports people now and in the future.
- Fair and sustainable charging arrangements across Wales, helping ensure people pay what is reasonable and affordable for their care and support.
- High-quality, outcome-focused care and support delivered consistently across Wales, regardless of where you live.
- Stronger regional services for people with the most complex needs.
- Progress towards improving the affordability and access to care and support.

Activity

Funding social care

Analyse social care funding, expenditure, financial pressures and future funding gaps.

Working towards fairer care charging arrangements

Regularly review the Parts 4 and 5 Codes of Practice and the Charging and Financial Assessment Regulations.

Develop options for the future of social care charging within a National Care Service.

Assess how future changes could affect people, local authorities and care services.

National Commissioning Framework (Code of Practice)

Review the current national principles and standards that guide commissioning practices, consult on changes and put new legislation into place.

Activity

Review how local fee rates for care homes are calculated and make sure that the process is clear and rates are fair to ensure there is consistency across Wales and further consider a national approach.

Planning and arranging complex care on a regional level

Develop options and support to strengthen current arrangements to put in place more joint arrangements for planning and arranging services to increase joint working and standardise approaches.

Strengthen joint arrangements for planning and arranging complex care services across health and social care at regional level.

Expected outcomes

- A stronger evidence base for funding and spending decisions.
- Fairer and more sustainable social care charging and funding.
- Greater consistency and transparency in commissioning and fee-setting.
- Clear, evidence-based advice to Ministers on future charging options.
- A better understanding of the impact of change on people and services.





3

A valued and sustainable workforce

A skilled, supported workforce with the capacity to deliver excellent care.

Key change makers

- Deliver a national workforce offer, including fair pay, progression and professional status.
- Improve recruitment and retention through national campaigns, career pathways and training routes.
- Strengthen workforce planning using national and regional data to match supply and demand.

Activity
National workforce offer (pay, progression, status)
Maintain the Real Living Wage as the minimum rate paid to the social care workforce.
Advance fair, sustainable and consistent pay through the Employment Rights Act and Fair Pay Agreements.
Improved workforce planning
Review and publish a Social Care Workforce Delivery Plan 2027–30 to ensure that the priorities and actions will address current workforce challenges.
Work with Social Care Wales and local authorities to strengthen workforce planning, recruitment and retention.
Stronger recruitment and retention
Develop a National Social Care Academy for Wales to support people to enter, develop and progress their careers in the social care sector.
Improve public understanding of social care and promote the value of its workforce.

Expected outcomes

- Fairer and more consistent pay across the social care workforce.
- Improved recruitment and retention.
- Stronger local and national workforce planning.
- Clearer learning and career pathways.
- Greater public understanding of social care and its workforce.
- A more skilled, valued and sustainable workforce.





4

Data, digital and outcomes

Better use of data and technology to improve care, transparency and decision-making.

Key change makers

- Establish a social care Central Intelligence Hub within the National Office to strengthen insight, support planning and improve our understanding of current and future demand for services.
- Embed a National Outcomes Framework focused on what matters to people receiving care and support.
- Improve transparency and accountability through regular national reporting on performance and outcomes.
- Identify potential pressures facing care services earlier and take action to help maintain stable services across Wales and improve how information about social care services is brought together and used to support planning, oversight and decision-making.

Activity

National data system (including person-level data)

Continue to refine and develop reliable and consistent social care data collection and reporting to understand and provide a national, regional and local picture of social care.

Improve social care data guidance and expectations to ensure good quality and timely data is being collated and reported on.

National Outcomes Framework

Maintain and enhance the National Outcomes Framework, ensuring measures remain relevant and meaningful.

Develop a national approach to measuring and reporting 'what matters' outcomes.

Activity
Central intelligence capability
Establish a Social Care Intelligence Hub within the National Office.
Introduce national market oversight and publish an annual National Market Report.
Publish annual social care reports, including the State of the Nation Report.
Establish learning opportunities within the sector aligned to the findings of data and research reports, to share best practice.
Develop multi-agency safeguarding datasets and a national dashboard.
Improved transparency and real-time insights
Review current guidance on assessment, eligibility and outcome recording under the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act.
Develop national oversight of pathways of care and transitions of care
Develop wider national reporting and insights between pathways of care and social care data services to support planning, identify opportunities for improvement and promote more consistent, timely care and support across Wales.

Expected outcomes

- Better understanding of people's experiences and 'what matters' outcomes.
- Stronger insight to inform policy, planning and sector development.
- Earlier identification of market and safeguarding risks.
- More consistent, reliable and timely social care data.
- Better evidence-based decision-making and oversight.





5

Prevention, safeguarding and strong communities

Supporting people earlier, keeping them safe, and building resilient communities.

Key change makers

- Shift investment towards prevention and early intervention to reduce escalation of need.
- Strengthen safeguarding governance and systems to improve protection and consistency across Wales.
- Improve recognition and support for unpaid carers as key partners in care.
- Expand community-based capacity to support people to live independently.

Activity

Stronger focus on prevention and early intervention

Assess current and future funding requirements for sustainable preventative services.

Develop a national vision and policy for prevention and early intervention for social care services.

Enhanced safeguarding governance and delivery

Deliver the Stronger Safeguarding for a Safer Wales Programme.

Deliver a 10-year Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse.

Improved support for unpaid carers

Publish and monitor delivery of the new National Strategy for Unpaid Carers and its priority areas for improvement.

Improve identification of carers and training available for carers looking after someone with dementia or at end of life.

Activity

Drive improvement in carer's needs assessment and consider timeframes for completion.

Deliver national programmes to directly benefit unpaid carers and ensure carers are included in anti-poverty policies.

Greater investment in community-based capacity

Work with Regional Partnership Boards to strengthen evidence-led joint planning, informed by Population Needs Assessments and Market Stability Reports.

Expected outcomes

- Earlier support and reduced escalation of need.
- Improved wellbeing, support and outcomes for carers.
- Stronger prevention, protection and safeguarding outcomes.
- More sustainable, evidence-led preventative services.





6

Seamless social care and support

A strong social care to support integration.

Key change makers

- Delivery of transformation programmes within social care that create more seamless care and support, with social care working as a strong partner alongside health and other public services.
- Promotion of social enterprise and not-for-profit models to diversify provision and increase community-based care.

Activity

Delivery of services

Delivery of the Ynghyd 2030 Children's Transformation Programme.

Continue to strengthen pathways of care across Wales through improved national oversight data, reporting and accountability to support more seamless care and reduce unnecessary delays and improve transitions between services.

Work with partners to improve co-ordination, share learning and promote consistent approaches that help people receive timely support, maintain their independence and achieve better outcomes.

Promotion of social enterprise and not-for-profit models

Work with partners to deliver a national project to promote alternative models of social care delivery.

Undertake an exercise to understand the level of social enterprise and not-for-profit models of social care services in Wales and identify options to increase provision.

Deliver on options identified to increase social enterprises and not-for-profit service models.

Activity
Greater use of regional models and shared functions
Review options to streamline social care delivery, including commissioning, financial assessments, appeals and charging.
Use data and evidence to ensure resources reflect current needs and anticipated future demand.
Integration
Work with the sector to strengthen how key social care enablers interface with and support the delivery of the Integrated Community Care System.

Expected outcomes

- Increased social enterprise within social care.
- More diverse and sustainable models of social care delivery.
- More streamlined and consistent delivery arrangements.
- Better alignment of resources with current and future need.
- Stronger alignment between social care enablers and the Integrated Community Care System.