

# Social care matters

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## Following the evidence: key issues for social care

Social care matters to all of us.

It touches us all at some point in our lives. It is important that people in communities in every part of Wales can rely on quality social care to help them live the lives that matter to them. We have set out below the key issues that need to be tackled in Wales for the sake of:

- the general well-being of the people of Wales
- those who need care and support now or in the future
- those family members and friends who may be involved in caring for them.

The scale of the challenge for social care in Wales can be seen from the statistics below, taken from [Care and Support in Wales: National population assessment report](#), published in 2017/18:

- By 2041, the number of people over 65 is expected to increase by almost 37 per cent
- Over 85s are expected to increase by 119 per cent by 2035
- 26 per cent of people in Wales have a limiting long-standing illness or disability
- One in four adults experience mental health problems or illness at some point in their lives
- 17 per cent of adults say they feel lonely
- the number of carers over 85 is expected to double in the next 20 years.

There is also a potential impact on younger people. 6,845 children were looked after by local authorities in Wales last year ([StatsWales](#)). The longer-term impact of COVID-19 on the economy is likely to have a harmful effect on family life, creating more demand for care and support from social care services.

### Evidence suggests Wales should focus on:

- **A sustainable funding settlement**
- **Fair recognition and reward for social care workers**
- **Business support for social care SMEs**
- **Digital transformation and new models of care and support**
- **A fundamental change to the way the childcare offer is funded**
- **Taking forward the 10-year health and social care workforce strategy.**

## A sustainable funding settlement

### What's the issue?

With sharply rising demand for care and support, the current funding model means services were already under serious strain even before the greater financial pressures caused by COVID-19.

This means maintaining current levels of service will soon be unaffordable and unsustainable. [The Health Foundation's 2016 assessment](#) of future funding needs for health and social care in Wales up to 2030/31 projected the need for net spending on adult social care alone to increase by 4.1 per cent a year in real terms, roughly equivalent to £65 million a year on average.

There is no doubt from the evidence that a new approach is needed to fund social care in Wales either from existing budgets or new sources of funding.

The rate of demographic change means this needs to happen soon if we are to maintain the provision of quality social care in Wales to the increasing number of people who need support.

### **The evidence says...**

there is need for a fundamental shift in how social care is prioritised and funded, with a radical and sustainable solution being agreed and implemented as soon as possible, to bring extra funding into the social care system.

## Fair recognition and reward for social care workers

### What's the issue?

The current pandemic has shown, if any further evidence was needed, how crucial the social care workforce is to the well-being of people of all ages in communities across Wales.

Social care workers provide people with the care and support they need to live the lives that matter to them. Their vital contribution also helps the NHS function more effectively, as our social care workers help keep people safe, making sure they are only referred to hospital if they really need to be there.

During the pandemic, these workers have put themselves at risk to make sure the people they support are kept safe. This is reflected in social care being one of the five occupations with [the highest rates of coronavirus-related deaths in England and Wales](#).

Yet social care workers are, on average, paid much less than other key workers. In April this year, the [Resolution Foundation](#) highlighted that 56 per cent of frontline care workers in Wales earn below the voluntary living wage.

The skill and dedication of social care workers is something recognised by the Welsh public. A Wales Omnibus Survey

conducted in June 2020 showed 46 per cent of the public had a higher opinion of social care workers than was the case a few months ago. More than 70 per cent of those surveyed felt those working in social care should benefit from similar pay and conditions to NHS workers.

We now register most social care workers, which is raising their status in Wales. If we can develop a better rewarded profession, it will also help attract more people with the right skills and values into care roles. We need more male and BAME carers, as well as those with Welsh language skills, to better reflect the population in Wales.

### **The evidence says...**

the value of people working in social care needs to be recognised in a meaningful way by making sure they are all paid at least the voluntary living wage and have parity of terms and conditions with comparable roles in the NHS. Without this, the sector faces major challenges in recruitment and retention.

## Business support for social care SMEs

### What's the issue?

Based on 2018 statistics, adult social care contributes £1.2bn directly to the economy in Wales every year and £2.2bn overall, when suppliers and their employees are factored in.

Social care employs 90,500 people in Wales, which is more than the NHS, making it the seventh largest contributor to the Welsh economy. It is made up of hundreds of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which provide local jobs for local people and contribute significantly to the wealth of local communities, as part of the foundational economy.

It is important that those SMEs are given the business support and financial backing to flourish through advice, grants and other forms of funding, such as supporting apprenticeships and learning at all levels.

These local businesses are likely to play a crucial part in helping the recovery of the economy in Wales, when the pandemic subsides. If properly supported, they may be able to employ people who are likely to lose their jobs in retail, leisure and other sectors particularly hard-hit by the pandemic.

Their role could be particularly valuable in more deprived areas of Wales where poverty is more prevalent, given the link between deprivation and the increased likelihood of people needing care and support.

### **The evidence says...**

social care is at the heart of the foundational economy, making a significant contribution to the prosperity of local communities, and that it must be a leading element of future policy for fair work and social partnership in a new economic context.

## Digital transformation and new models of care and support

### What's the issue?

The pandemic has shown we must all change our ways of working and no more so than in the social care sector. In a profession where human contact is so important, the pandemic has reinforced the importance of being able to work and communicate as effectively virtually as it is face-to-face.

Greater use of digital technology could mean better sharing of information, remote monitoring of vulnerable people and providing individuals who receive care and support with more opportunities to keep in touch virtually with family, friends and practitioners.

Even before COVID-19, health and social care practitioners taking part in the workforce strategy consultation gave their views on what's needed most to capitalise on the opportunities offered by digital technology.

They said a better infrastructure was needed in a world where most workers and those being cared for would be affected by digital technology within the next decade. They also voiced a need to improve digital literacy across the whole workforce.

To address these issues, we need a joined-up approach to transformation across health, social care and other related sectors that has digital solutions and new models of service at its heart.

This would need to take full account of the needs of the social care sector and the people it serves, making sure there is enough investment to provide sustainable solutions and the training for organisations and their people to make best use of them.

### **The evidence says....**

investment in digital skills and new solutions is needed to help transform the experiences of people who use care and support, as well as the efficiency and sustainability of the organisations and professionals that support them.

## A fundamental change to the way the childcare offer is funded

### What's the issue?

The childcare sector plays a critical role in Wales's economic and social development. It enables many parents to work, supporting economic growth and the reduction of poverty across the country.

With parental working patterns constantly evolving, childcare will always be in demand. The current funding model for the childcare offer had already put services under strain even before the greater financial pressures caused by COVID-19.

With the ratio requirements of National Minimum Standards, cost of living rises and other overhead costs, childcare settings are struggling to remain viable. Currently, there is disparity between different funding models, for example, the Childcare Offer, Flying Start and Early Entitlement (Foundation Phase). This is made worse by the way in which the childcare element of the tax credit system is paid. Payment is made to parents, rather than it going directly to the childcare settings. This means childcare settings are reliant on parents paying them promptly. This makes maintaining current levels of service less affordable and sustainable and the only way settings can reduce the financial impact is to pass the cost on to the parents through their fees. However, this is difficult as they must remain competitive.

### **The evidence says...**

a review is needed of Government-funded childcare rates and how they are paid. This could help reduce financial strain on childcare settings that are already under significant financial pressure and support their future sustainability.

## Taking forward the 10-year health and social care workforce strategy

### What's the issue?

Social Care Wales and Health Education and Improvement Wales worked in partnership during 2018 and 2019 to review and gather evidence about how best to meet the needs of the health and social care workforce over the next 10 years.

The organisations worked with more than 1,000 colleagues across the country to develop a comprehensive workforce strategy for health and social care.

The ambition of the workforce strategy is to make sure that, by 2030, we have the right number of engaged, motivated and valued people, including volunteers and carers, able to deliver flexible and responsive health and social care that meets the needs of the people of Wales.

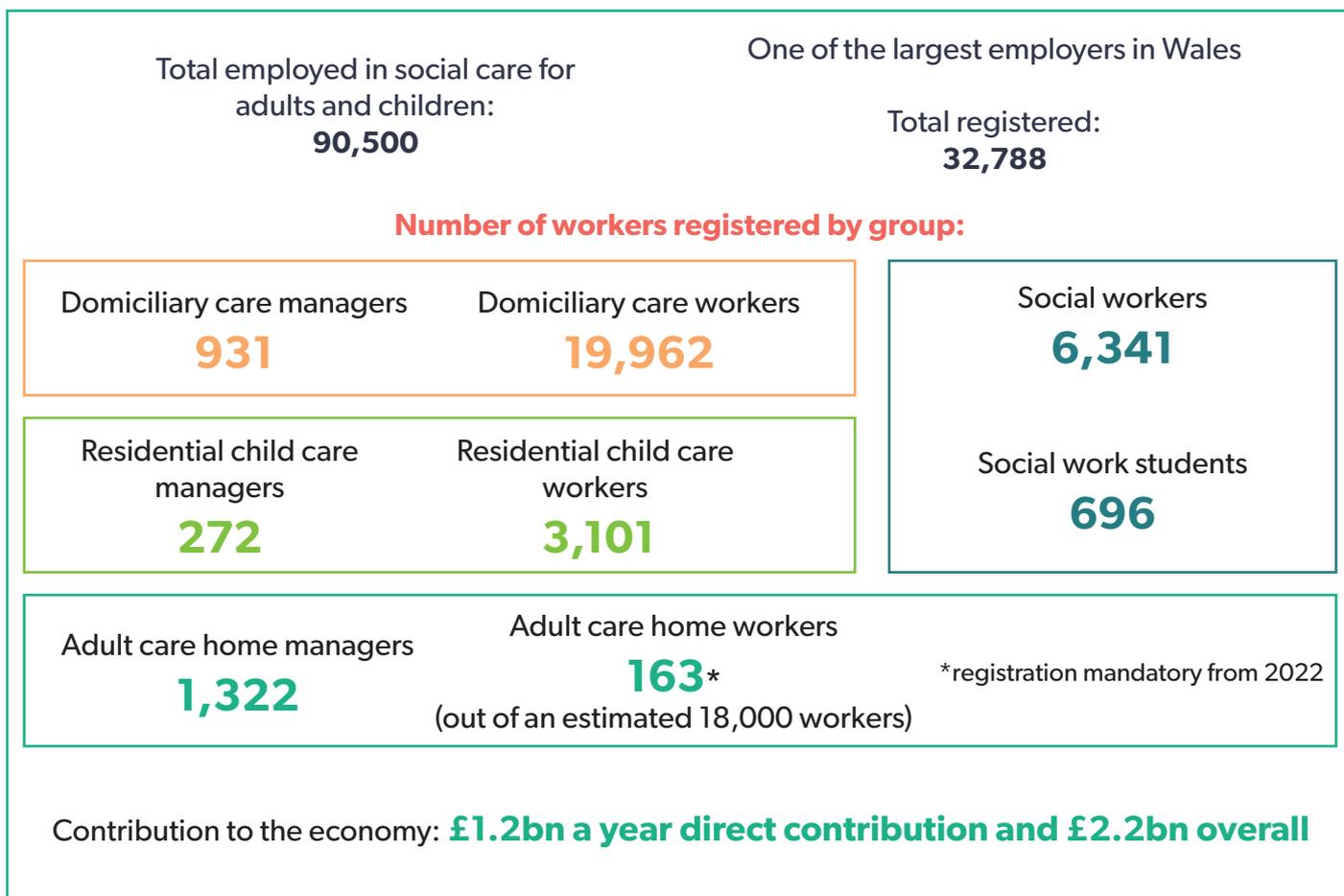
Among the issues that mattered most to the leaders and practitioners who helped shape the strategy were:

- parity of esteem and terms and conditions between the health and care workforces
- a joined-up approach to:
  - workforce planning
  - practices to support seamless working
  - developing leaders
- the importance of multi-disciplinary teams to meeting people's needs.

### **The evidence says....**

there is a need for a fully supported and funded workforce strategy, if a well-aligned seamless service between health and social care is to be achieved.

## Social care in Wales in numbers



## Social Care Wales – what we do

We are the regulator of the social care workforce in Wales. That means we register practitioners, set standards of practice and make sure workers are fit to practise. We are also responsible for developing and improving the workforce, improving services, setting priorities for research and gathering data. We are funded by the Welsh Government.

