



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**  
Social Care **Wales**



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**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
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Becoming an anti-  
discrimination Wales  
promoting equality, valuing  
diversity in social care

# **Strategic equality plan 2022 to 2027**

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We welcome comments about the equality plan. If you have any comments or want to inform our work, please contact us.

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## Overview

This strategic equality plan (equality plan) demonstrates Social Care Wales's commitment to becoming an organisation that actively seeks to improve the lives of people with protected characteristics by:

- tackling discrimination
- promoting equality and diversity
- creating a more inclusive society.

We recognise our role is to be a leader in these areas in social care and early years, and to work with others in the sector to create real and meaningful change.

We understand that our commitment to oppose discrimination can never be passive. We must be honest and open about where we are, and what we need to do. The objectives set out in this equality plan are part of that, but we will need to go further in our work if we are to meet our, and our citizens', ambitions.



## Foreword by our Chair and Chief Executive

This new strategic equality plan gives us an opportunity to align with, and reflect, the ambitions of our *Strategic plan for 2022 to 2027*. It also gives us an opportunity to respond to the current and ongoing inequalities that have been highlighted and made worse by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has shown how crucial the social care and early years workforces are to the well-being of people of all ages in communities across Wales. These workers have met the enormous challenges of the pandemic through their commitment and professionalism. There is now greater recognition by the public that social care and early years workers are key workers – and not just in a time of crisis.

Sadly, the social care workforce has been greatly affected by the pandemic. The social care workforce was among the occupational groups at [highest risk of death from Covid-19, particularly care home workers and domiciliary care workers](#). The impact on the physical and mental health of workers has also been brought to the fore, with people having to cope with new and incredibly difficult challenges.

The impact of the pandemic on older and disabled people, ethnic minorities, some women and people living in socio-economic disadvantage is a wakeup call for the public sector and society. We must make sure our work supporting the Covid-19 recovery is informed by:

- up-to-date evidence
- our engagement with others
- the use of equality impact assessments to better understand the impact our decisions may have on different types of people<sup>1</sup>.

The pandemic has made us focus our equality plan and equality objectives on tackling the inequalities made worse by Covid-19 and we are committed to putting equality and human rights at the centre of our decision making.

We are committed to being an anti-discrimination organisation – placing equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of our work. Our support for the sector after Covid-19 must recognise the impact it has had on those with protected characteristics.

We also recognise that we can do more in some areas and we will prioritise the areas where we can make the most difference, in line with our remit and responsibilities.

This plan provides information about the five areas we propose to focus on in our work on equality and diversity going forward. Our equality objectives have been informed by a series of engagement events with people who share one or more of the protected characteristics.

**Mick Giannasi, Chair, and Sue Evans, Chief Executive**

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1. *Rebuilding a more equal and fairer Wales: Focus on the unequal impact of the coronavirus pandemic*, May 2020 – Equality and Human Rights Commission

## Who are we?

We provide national leadership and expertise in social care and early years, leading on developing and regulating the social care workforce, service improvement, data and research to improve care and support.

## What do we do?

We:

- **develop the workforce** so they have the knowledge and skills to protect, empower and support those who need help and care
- **work with others to improve services** for areas agreed as a national priority
- **provide information** for the public, the workforce and other organisations
- **share practice** with the workforce so they can provide the best response to meet support needs
- **set priorities for research** to get evidence of what works well
- **set standards** for the care and support workforce, making them accountable for their work.

We support and promote innovation, and share knowledge, practice and experiences across social care in Wales. We work with partners to make sure we can work together to improve outcomes for people and families who use care and support, as well as those who provide it. We will act as a leader, champion and voice for social care and early years, offering constructive challenge and support to professionals and providers.

Our work is underpinned by the principle that adults and children who use care and support, as well as their families and carers, work together to create support that works for them. The approach is values driven and built on the principle that those who use a service are best placed to help design it. We will do this directly in our work where appropriate, but we will also make sure we follow this approach in all our advice about evidence to the sector.

## Our vision

We want to make a positive difference for care and support in Wales for children, adults and their families and carers.

## Our strategic equality plan

We have a statutory duty to publish an equality plan.

But our ambition is to go beyond the plan and to promote equality and tackle discrimination in all our work. We want to play a leadership role in making sure Wales opposes discrimination, so we will be vigilant, and speak up and challenge discrimination, in whatever form it may take.

## Developing our equality plan and equality objectives for 2022 to 2027

Our equality plan and equality objectives have been informed by a number of evidence sources, such as:

- [Locked out: liberating disabled people's lives and rights in Wales beyond COVID-19](#) – Welsh Government, July 2021
- [Into sharp relief: inequality and the pandemic](#) – Welsh Parliament Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, August 2020
- [First Minister's BAME Covid-19 Advisory Group: Report of the Socioeconomic Subgroup](#) – June 2020
- Equality and Human Rights Commission, [Briefing Paper 1: Rebuilding a more equal and fairer Wales: Focus on the unequal impact of the coronavirus pandemic](#) – May 2020
- [the equality profile of the social care workers who are registered with us](#)
- *Coronavirus (COVID-19) related deaths by occupation, England and Wales: deaths registered between 9 March and 28 December 2020* – Office for National Statistics

## Engaging and involving people who use care and support

When we set our equality objectives, it is important we listen and reflect the views of those who share one or more of the protected characteristics. Not only because we have a legal duty to do so, but so we can make sure our work is informed by their views and needs.

Our equality objectives have been informed by people who use care and support, their families and carers. With support from Diverse Cymru, we held six engagement events in December 2020 and shared an online questionnaire in which we tested the draft equality objectives.

We received feedback from people who represented a range of the protected characteristics.

We are grateful to those people who helped us develop our equality objectives and all those who took the time to comment on our plans. Many people gave their time freely and willingly, and we would like to acknowledge and thank them for their contribution.

Their feedback has been invaluable in helping us make sure the equality objectives better reflect the priorities and concerns of diverse communities.

We will continue to engage with, and involve, a diverse range of people as we fulfil the commitments we make in our strategic equality plan.



## Our organisational approach

We will promote equality and tackle discrimination in everything we do. We will consider equality and diversity in all our work and expect all our staff to understand the principles of fairness, equality and inclusion, and put them into practice.

We will tackle discrimination on the grounds of protected characteristics<sup>2</sup> (set out in the Equality Act 2010) and discrimination experienced on the grounds of:

- preferred language
- family/domestic responsibilities
- socio-economic status
- any other individual characteristic that may limit a person's opportunity to achieve what matters to them.

It is also important that we recognise the reality of intersectionality in our work. We need to recognise the cumulative effect of multiple identities, and to understand the impact of our work as we develop and realise our priorities.

Our Board members will use our five-year equality plan to scrutinise our work and our progress in accomplishing our equality objectives, holding our staff to account. We will share our progress on accomplishing our equality objectives with you on our website, and in our communication and meetings with you.

## Comprehensive strategic approach

To make sure we embed equality, diversity and inclusion across our work we will remove the artificial distinction between our work in this area and our wider activity. The equality plan will become an underlying part of our new corporate strategic plan and we will report to our Board and the Welsh Government on our progress in fulfilling its commitments.

We will make our commitment to promoting equality and tackling discrimination a central objective in our strategic plan.

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2. [Age](#), [disability](#), [gender reassignment](#), [marriage and civil partnership](#), [pregnancy and maternity](#), [race](#), [religion or belief](#), [sex](#) and [sexual orientation](#).



## Welsh Government leadership

We recognise that the Welsh Government is leading on the promotion of equality and the tackling of discrimination across public services. We are aware of the development of a *Race Equality Action Plan* and an *LGBTQ+ Action Plan*, which may be followed by other similar plans for those with protected characteristics.

We fully support and welcome this leadership from the Welsh Government. It sets an ambitious and timely set of markers for us all. We will continue to shape our plans in this area to reflect that leadership and to take forward actions that fall upon us.

We are also aware that the Equality and Human Rights Commission is carrying out an [inquiry into racial inequality](#), looking at the experiences of low-paid ethnic minority workers in the health and social care sectors during the pandemic. We will look to feed this work into the implementation of our plan.

Finally, we recognise the ground-breaking leadership of the Welsh Government in the area of socio-economic disadvantage at a time when the coronavirus pandemic has led to increased levels of poverty in Wales and a potential economic downturn. We are committed, through our work around greater equality, diversity and inclusion, to support the aims of the [socio-economic duty](#).

## Welsh language

We recognise our responsibilities under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and our leadership role in supporting the Welsh Government's *More than just words strategic framework for Welsh language services in health, social services and social care*.

Our Welsh Language Scheme (Welsh Language Act 1993) and the Welsh language standards set out how we need to treat the English and Welsh languages on an equality basis. While the Welsh language is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, our approach and values ensure our work and policy decisions champion the importance of the Welsh language for people who use care and support, and their families and carers.

## Our objectives

### Objective 1: Improve the use of equality data and information

#### What do we want to achieve?

We will improve the data collected about the social care workforce and the way it is used to better understand what the sector can do to achieve a diverse workforce that better reflects the communities it serves.

#### Why is this one of our objectives?

We want a social care workforce that is more representative of the communities it serves, particularly where there is evidence of underrepresentation. We want to work with partners to identify and address the barriers that may prevent people who share one or more of the protected characteristics from joining the social care workforce.

By working with employers to tackle attraction, recruitment and retention issues, and provide them with training, information and resources, we will improve the provision of high-quality care and support for people, children and families.

Our recent [publication about the domiciliary care workforce](#) found that 84 per cent are female, 97 per cent of workers are white and only nine per cent are fluent in Welsh. This needs to change if we are serious about providing meaningful care and support. Providing care and support for someone is a very personal activity, and a common bond of trust, culture and language helps provide the highest quality care.

We must also consider the groups most likely to be affected by the expected rise in poverty because of the Covid-19 pandemic. These include young people, ethnic minorities, and disabled people who are already closest to the poverty line<sup>3</sup>.

People who use care and support, their carers and families told us that this objective should also focus on making sure people who use a variety of languages and who are from a variety of cultures are supported properly.

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3. *How coronavirus has affected equality and human rights* – Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2020

**Our early actions will include:**

<b>Actions</b>	<b>How will we know we're making a difference?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through <i>A Strategic Approach to Social Care Data in Wales</i>, we will take forward specific actions to enhance data collection and its availability to support a fairer and more equal workplace.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We see increased use of our data and insights by employers and local authorities to identify trends and opportunities for improvements in employment, retention and practice.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will work with local authorities and providers to improve the data we collect about the social care workforce. We will pilot a new online portal before it is rolled out to providers, which will collect aggregated information about protected characteristics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We see improvements in the quality and completion of data about equality and diversity in the workforce (such as the percentage of data populated for protected characteristics).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As professional registration expands, the data we collect will give us and the sector a greater understanding about our regulated workforce, including how it is changing over time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Registration to adult care home workers and other new groups will be completed in October 2022.</li> <li>We will publish profile reports about the people on our Register, including specific reports about new and existing groups, from January 2023.</li> </ul>

## Objective 2: Equality at work

### What do we want to achieve?

We will work with employers and leaders in social care and early years to help them advance equality of opportunity for the social care and early years workforce.

### Why is this one of our objectives?

Ethnic minority communities have reported racial inequality in Wales, with some staff in health and social care settings saying they felt they had been treated less favourably than their white colleagues during the coronavirus pandemic<sup>4</sup>.

The GMB also reports that workers from an ethnic minority background remain at serious risk at work because of the lack of comprehensive risk assessments carried out during the pandemic<sup>5</sup>. We believe social care workplaces should lead the way in terms of equality and inclusion, giving everyone the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their background, identity or circumstance, so they feel valued and supported at work.

Going above and beyond to support the most vulnerable in our society has been a major feature displayed by the social care and early years workforce during the pandemic. The pandemic has also raised the profile of the workforce, the work they do and their value to society as key workers.

But many of these workers are relatively low paid and in employment that's often insecure<sup>6</sup>. Having guaranteed employment and income are an essential part (among a number of factors) of making sure the social care and early years workforce achieves equal and fair work practices.

We will act as a supportive and critical friend, challenging providers and employers to make sure any actions to address inequality and discrimination in the social care and early years workforce are based on the strongest evidence.

We will support the ambition to have fair reward and recognition across the social care and early years workforce. This will take account of the Report of the Fair Work Commission (2019) and *Is Wales Fairer?* (2018).

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4. *First Minister's BAME Covid-19 Advisory Group: Report of The Socioeconomic Subgroup* – June 2020

5. *GMB Report Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Workers & Covid-19* – October 2020

6. [Fair care work. A post Covid-19 agenda for integrated employment relations in health and social care](#), King's Business School – June 2020

### Our early actions will include:

Actions	How will we know we're making a difference?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will pilot new support mechanisms in our regulation work to make sure people facing action have access to advice and representation throughout the process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support services will be commissioned and in place by April 2022.</li> <li>The number of registered persons accessing support services from April 2022 onwards.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will actively support the Welsh Government's <i>Race Equality Action Plan</i>, and other similar plans, to support the transformation set out for Wales.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our measures in this area will be aligned to the Welsh Government's <i>Race Equality Action Plan</i>, which is due to be published in 2022.</li> </ul>

## Objective 3: Digital inclusion

### What do we want to achieve?

We will work to make sure equality, accessibility and inclusion are central to our work of building a digitally ready social care and early years workforce in Wales.

### Why is this one of our objectives?

The world has changed because of the pandemic. One of the biggest changes has been the increasing speed of the move to digital services and virtual communication, which risks worsening unfairness in society.

Social care and early years workers who can't access or use digital technology may struggle to engage with our increasing digital activity and that of others in the sector, as we begin the work to support the sector's recovery and sustainability.

We have also seen a quick growth in the use of digital technologies, such as tablet devices, to give people who use care and support access to support and advice. This highlights the need for us to rethink the role of digital resources in the way care is assessed and provided going forward<sup>7</sup>.

The workforce strategy's ambition to "build a digitally ready workforce" can only happen if equality and accessibility are at the heart of digital literacy, skills and capabilities.

People with protected characteristics told us this issue was a big area of concern for the future. People who use care and support, their carers and families also told us how they and their care workers needed to adapt quickly during the pandemic so they could be assessed online, as workers couldn't provide face-to-face support.

We will work with Digital Communities Wales to support the Welsh Government's commitment to improve people's access to affordable broadband across Wales and to improve people's digital knowledge and skills, so they can make the most of digital public services. We will also work with employers to support their workforce.

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7. *The Road to Renewal: five priorities for health and social care* – King's Fund, July 2020

## Our early actions will include:

Actions	How will we know we're making a difference?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will work with others, including Digital Communities Wales, to support the workforce with their digital skills and confidence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of resources produced and qualitative feedback from users.</li> <li>The statistics about the increase of users' confidence from the modules' pre- and post-assessment evaluations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will embed user-centred design principles when we develop new digital resources for the sector, prioritising accessibility across all our digital work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback from the workforce (learners) about specific initiatives (digital resources), including the evaluation from learners using our learning management system.</li> </ul>

## Objective 4: The well-being of the social care and early years workforce

### What do we want to achieve?

We will promote our well-being resources and offers, and improve access to them, to support the well-being of the social care and early years workforce.

### Why is this one of our objectives?

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the pressures faced by frontline social care workers. These pressures – along with the increased risk of catching Covid-19 and the fear of putting family members at risk – have raised concerns about the increasing stress on workers<sup>8</sup>.

The pandemic continues to affect the physical and mental well-being of the workforce, with higher levels of sickness and anxiety. The social care workforce had one of the [highest death rates](#) of all occupations during the first wave of the pandemic, and the pandemic has led to a growing recognition of how important it is to support the well-being of the workforce.

We are working with others to develop initiatives and resources to support the workforce's well-being that reflect a range of experiences in different settings and roles. In doing this, we must recognise the specific and unique challenges faced by those with protected characteristics. We believe equality, diversity and inclusion are essential to ensuring the well-being of our workforce and they must be at the heart of our approach.

People who use care and support told us the effect of Covid-19 on mental health and well-being makes this objective much more urgent. They felt that we, along with social care and early years employers, must act immediately to accomplish this objective.

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8. *The Impact of COVID-19 on social care workers' workload, wellbeing and ability to provide care safely: Findings from the UK* – The University of Kent, November 2020



## Our early actions will include:

Actions	How will we know we're making a difference?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will develop and provide a broad well-being offer for those working in social care, making sure the service is accessible and open to the needs of a diverse workforce. This will include introducing a health and well-being framework to support employers to maintain their staff's well-being.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will see improved well-being among the workforce.</li> <li>The reach and uptake of our well-being support offers.</li> <li>The number of employers and workplaces using and accessing the health and well-being framework's resources.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will put a consistent approach in place to monitor and measure the employee experience through health and social care staff surveys. This will allow us to capture staff experience across different settings, professional groups and protected characteristics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will put in place a well-being survey that's accessible, easy to understand and gives the workforce confidence.</li> <li>The number of people completing the well-being surveys.</li> <li>The well-being survey's reach and engagement from the diversity of the workforce.</li> </ul>

## Objective 5: Equality, diversity and inclusion within Social Care Wales

### What do we want to achieve?

We will promote opportunities to work with us, to help us achieve a more diverse and inclusive Board, staff and regulatory panel, and to widen our networks.

### Why is this one of our objectives?

We want to lead by example. We are proud of the diversity of our Board, in terms of gender, age, disability, background and lived experiences. But we believe we can do more to improve the diversity of our Board.

We believe we can also do more to improve the diversity of our regulatory panel, which looks at the evidence gathered in cases where concerns have been raised about social care workers' behaviour.

People who use care and support have told us that to achieve this objective change must start with us. We should share examples where this has worked well and influence our networks and partners with our positive action and communication to help spread this shift in culture.

We will continue to monitor our staff diversity. We want to create an environment where staff can thrive, accomplish their best work and their difference is valued. We will try to stamp out discrimination, make sure everyone has the same opportunities and encourage good relations between our staff, our Board members and anyone else who's involved in our work.

The coronavirus pandemic has led to increased levels of poverty in Wales with lower incomes and a potential economic downturn. This will have a bigger impact on people who already experience socio-economic disadvantage and will cut across all forms of inequality.

Our work to achieve greater equality, diversity and inclusion in our organisation will help us move the [socio-economic duty](#) forward and reduce socio-economic disadvantage.

## Our early actions will include:

Actions	How will we know we're making a difference?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will run cultural awareness training for all our staff and board members. This will be embedded in the induction process for our staff and members, with an evaluation to follow.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results from our staff survey about how the learning has increased our staff's knowledge and skills and how they have used this learning to inform their work.</li> <li>Results from our Board effectiveness review about how the learning has increased their knowledge and skills, and how they have used it to inform their work.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will review our recruitment activity to make sure we are encouraging applications from those with protected characteristics, including embedding external benchmarks such as the <a href="#">Disability Confident scheme</a>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All our recruitment activity will be in line with best practice.</li> <li>We will use recruitment data profiles to inform how and the way we recruit roles in the future.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will actively support the Welsh Government with its recruitment to our Board by engagement, and communicating and promoting opportunities to help us recruit a more diverse Board in terms of attracting candidates from a black, minority and ethnic background.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The feedback and evaluation of our communication activity in supporting Board recruitment. This will help us develop any further ways of promoting the role of the Board and future recruitments with the Welsh Government Public Bodies Unit</li> <li>Recruitment data profiles (from Welsh Government Public Bodies Unit).</li> </ul>

## Measuring our progress

Each of the five objectives set out in this plan will be reported on in our *Annual Equality Report*, which will be published on our website. We will use a mixture of qualitative and quantitative measures to assess our progress against each objective.

