

Briefing on the work of Social Care Wales

In advance of our scrutiny session on Wednesday 20th March we have prepared some further information on two areas identified in your invite to consider our work as it relates to care experienced children and young people and their families. This briefing includes:

- information on our overall role and remit to support children's social care.
- further detail on workforce data and ongoing work to develop it.

Social Care Wales role and remit to support children's social care in Wales

The Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 determines that Social Care Wales's main objective is to protect, promote and maintain the safety and well-being of the public in Wales. Social Care Wales's ambitions are set out in our strategic plan¹ and we report our progress in an annual impact report. We have several core functions:

- Professional registration and regulation of social care workers including residential childcare workers and managers, and social workers.
- Supporting evidence-based practice through digital communities; evidence summaries e.g. trauma-informed approaches²; supporting research priority-setting exercises e.g. on transitions
- Supporting innovation in the sector e.g. innovation coaching offer
- Supporting service improvement through promoting strengths-based practice; improvement in safeguarding training and more recently on principles of positive cultures in collaboration with Care Inspectorate Wales
- Supporting the implementation of the strategic approach to social care data³ this includes providing social care data through a portal accessible at socialcaredata.wales
- Development and delivery of the workforce strategy for health and social care; (see annual report⁴). The strategy drives key areas of work of particular interest to Committee members include:
 - Workforce wellbeing framework and support
 - Leadership development and support
 - Induction, qualifications and standards
 - Attraction and retention
 - Delivery of workforce plans for professions including mental health; social workers; and direct care and support workers
 - Workforce supply and shape that includes workforce data and planning.

¹ <https://socialcare.wales/about-us/our-outcomes#section-65697-anchor>

² <https://insightcollective.socialcare.wales/evidence-summaries/trauma-informed-approaches>

³ <https://socialcare.wales/cms-assets/documents/Statement-of-Strategic-Intent-vFinal-EL3.pdf>

⁴ [Workforce strategy | Social Care Wales](#)

In addition, we are undertaking specific work to support the transformation of children's services programme. This includes:

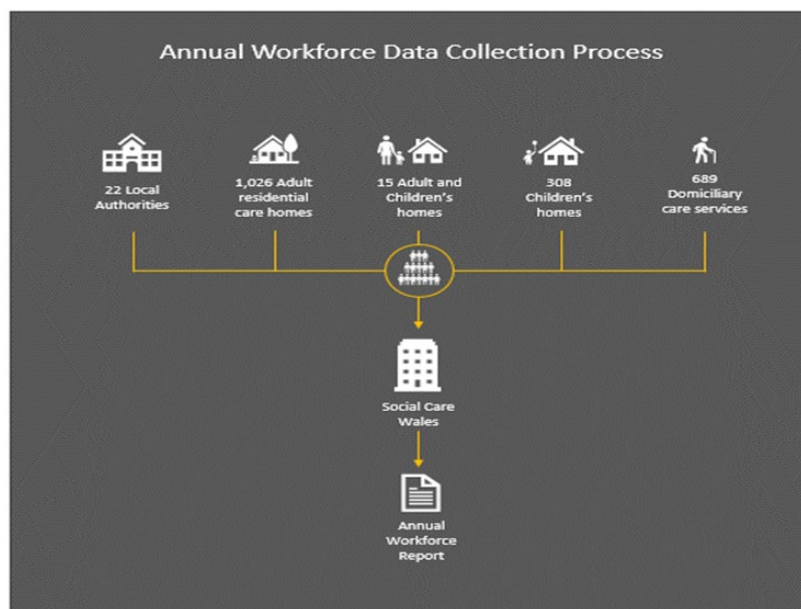
- helping to understand local authorities' workforce needs for residential childcare
- WeCare targeted activity to support recruitment into residential childcare, having previously focussed on social work, and
- support for developing more consistent therapeutic approaches.

Workforce Data

We recognise the committee has identified workforce data as a specific area of scrutiny, we recognise the collection of robust workforce data and intelligence is a vital component in planning for an effective workforce in Wales. As such we have provided more information in relation to how our work is developing in this area.

We have two main sources of workforce data:

- 1) **Annual workforce data collection:** Launched by Social Care Wales in 2021, this collection enables a report outlining the characteristics of all those who work in in social care, for the first time. This follows the setting out of the Welsh Government's Performance and Improvement framework and provided a unified approach for previous multiple collections. The workforce data is completed by the employer in each social care setting as shown in the diagram below. See also summary of our data journey in the appendix.

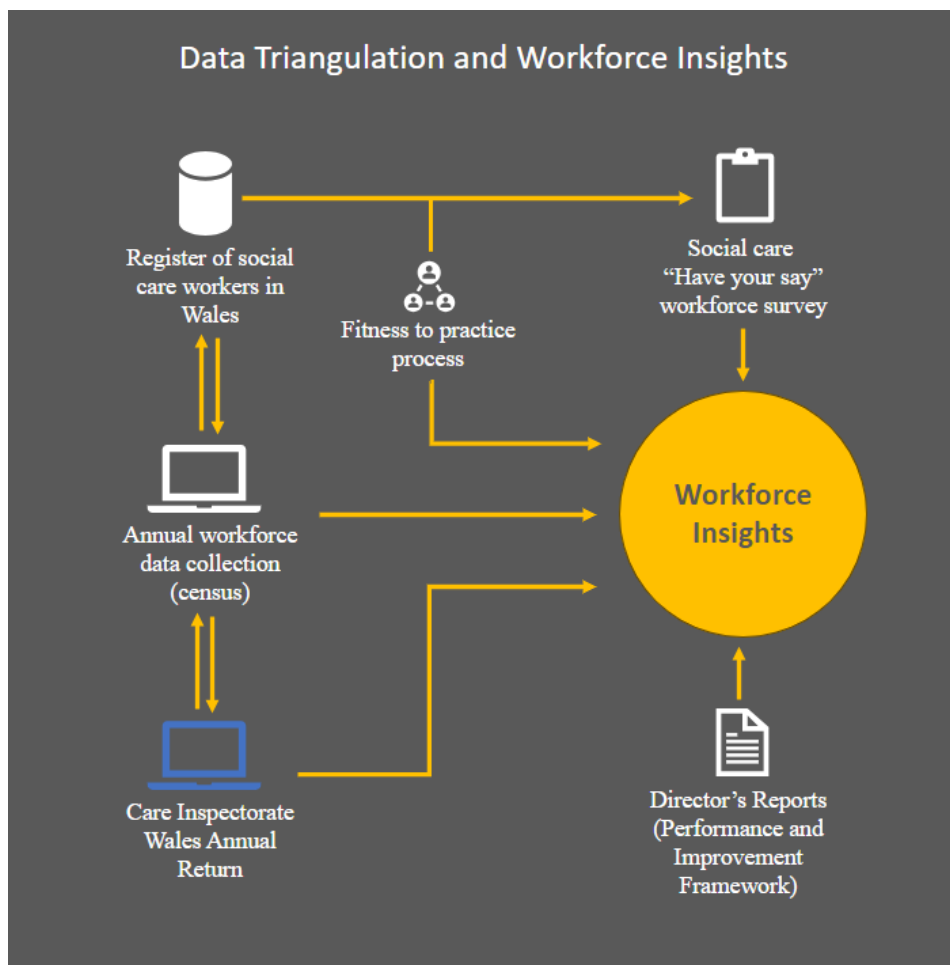


- 2) **Register of social care workers in Wales:** Social Care Wales was created in 2017 and has seen a rapid increase in the number of social care workers registered. We now have a register of 60,000+ individuals. Registered people are responsible for maintaining their personal details held by Social Care Wales. We have recently produced a briefing on social workers which is attached.

Further data collection:

In 2023 we launched a pilot survey of the registered workforce. This enabled, for the first time, a single survey providing insights from the workforce on areas such as health and wellbeing, pay and conditions, training and development, recruitment and retention, and what it's like to work in social care. We are now carrying out this survey on an annual basis and have expanded it to include social care roles beyond the registered workforce (such as Occupational Therapists and Registered Nurses in social care).

This provides us with the ability to triangulate data from a range of sources as shown in the diagram below and give a much more comprehensive overview of the workforce.



Differences in data provided

As a committee you raised a question over the data provided, particularly on the number of children social worker agency workers. The data provided in 2022 represented data from the second annual workforce data collection (with a trend from 56 to 49 individual agency workers from the previous year). The data we provided more recently (429 individuals) is from the Register. We now have the ability to triangulate data and so make reference in our annual report when data does not correlate from other data as described in the diagram above, and therefore identify areas where we need to improve the data collection and validation.

ADSSC are leading on the All Wales-Pledge, a commitment by Children's Services leaders across Wales, to adopt and implement agreed principles when engaging recruitment agencies in the supply of social workers. This means they will have the most accurate and up to date position of agency workers employed by local authorities, as this data is collected quarterly.

We recognise our shared commitment to workforce data that is routinely verified and published. As part of our long-term strategic leadership in this area, we continue to improve our capacity and systems. Following the first workforce data collection, we have:

- Employed data specialists with responsibility for collecting, validating and reporting on workforce data.
- Improved our systems and data reporting capabilities and made year on year improvements to data collection and reporting approaches.
- Our workforce data collection and reporting has been audited and received reasonable assurance on its validity.
- Commenced a data maturity exercise with local authority social services departments to understand areas where we need to support improved use of data.

We will continue to improve approaches to workforce data collection. This includes:

- working with CIW and self-assessment returns;
- working with local authorities to ensure data provided by HR departments is reviewed by social services senior managers prior to submission;
- working with local authorities to develop more robust process for recording direct payments and individuals employed as personal assistants.

At Social Care Wales we will also review and revise our processes for handling requests for data so that there is a single process that can be followed for all requests that includes validation checks, regardless of the source or entry point for the request.

Sharing data and insights

Annual workforce data reports are routinely published on our website,⁵ however we also have the national social care data portal for Wales socialcaredata.wales. This provides open access to interrogate data from a range of verified sources and includes a section on workforce data. The portal enables any individual to analyse data (for example you can use the portal to identify the age profile of social workers by local authority area).

Our evidence summaries draw on our most recent data where available, such as on [Attraction and recruitment](#) and [Improved wellbeing and workforce retention](#). In the longer term, these will be accompanied by 'data summaries' that explore the data on the portal.

We are also producing a workforce insight series, an annual set of written briefings that draw together key findings on workforce-related research conducted/commissioned by us, to help inform decisions around attraction, recruitment and retention in social care. There are two forthcoming briefings on improving terms and conditions in social care and active recognition in social care.

We also will be formally launching in spring a new Insight Collective a website that provides access to quality research, evidence and information on social care.

⁵ [Social Care Wales | New report shows almost 85,000 people work in the...](#)

Appendix

History of social care workforce data collection in Wales

2004

Staffing of local authority social services (STF1-3) introduced as part of the Performance Management Development programme. No data collected about any independent social care provision at this point in time.

STF data is collected each year until 2016.

2014

Staffing of local authority social services (STF1-3) reviewed as part of data requirements for the new Social services and wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. Minor changes are made to the definitions, but the collection remains largely the same.

Revisions do not include information about independent provision, which has increased significantly since 2004.

This collection continues until 2020.

2017

Social Care Wales is created to support the regulation of the social care workforce in Wales. Social Care Wales produces reports on the registered social care workforce in Wales and for the first time commissions work looking at independent commissioned services.

2019

Welsh Government begin the process of replacing the performance measurement framework that was introduced with the Social services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, with an improved Performance and Improvement Framework. Following formal consultation, it is decided that previous disparate workforce collections be replaced by a single unified workforce data collection managed by Social Care Wales. 2019 is the last time STF returns were completed due to all data collections being suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic.

2021

Social Care Wales launch the Annual workforce data collection for the first time. A report outlining the characteristics of all those people who work in social care is released for the first time.

2024

Social Care Wales begins a review of the annual collection process following the first three years. It has been decided that further improvements can be made to the collection process by combining this collection with the Annual Reporting process undertaken by Care Inspectorate Wales. Social Care Wales continue to work with stakeholders to refine the collection process and improve intelligence and insight into the social care workforce in Wales.



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Social Care **Wales**



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Social workers in Wales

What we know about
the social workers who
are registered with us

March 2024

Find out more at:
socialcare.wales



How many social workers are registered?

In September 2023, **6,736** social workers were registered with us:

1,734

work in adults' services – up from **1,578** in **2021**

2,457

work in children's services – up from **2,219** in **2021**

2,545

work in combined adults' and children's services – down from **2,663** in **2021**

This is **185** more social workers than in September 2022. Of those:

89

work in children's services

72

work in adults' services

24

work in combined adults' and children's services

The significant growth in the numbers of registered social workers coincides with local authorities' investment in 'growing their own' social workers.



Who are our social workers?

Gender

82.6%
are female

17.4%
are male

Ethnicity

89.1%
are White

4.9%
are Black

2.4%
are Asian

1.8%
are of mixed ethnicity

Age

46
years old – the
average age

55.2%
are aged between **40**
to **60** years old – down
from **57.5%** in **2021**

33.2%
are under **40** years
old – up from
29.8% in **2021**

11.6%
are aged over **60**
years old – down
from **12.8%** in **2021**

Welsh language

48.9% of social workers
have some Welsh language
ability – up **1.6%** since **2021**

Where are our social workers employed?

Where our social workers work

65.8%

are employed by local authorities – down from **67.9%** in **2022** and **71.3%** in **2021**

11.5%

are employed by an agency – up from **9.3%** in **2022**

A further **6.7%** are employed by an agency on top of their main employment

494

registered social workers are employed outside social care – this is up from **411** in **2022** and **281** in **2021**

Agency social workers

55.4% work in children's services – an increase of **103** social workers since **2022**

25.6% work in adults' services – an increase of **43** social workers since **2022**

What do social workers think about their job?

This is what social workers told us in spring 2023:

76%

started working in social care because they wanted to make a difference to people's lives

38%

are dissatisfied with their current job

77%

say having too much work or not having enough time to do it causes stress at work

34%

think the right staff are in place to provide services

only **24%**

feel safe at work

40%

think there are barriers to accessing training