

Cafodd yr ymateb hwn ei gyflwyno i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Flaenoriaethau'r Chweched Senedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [Sixth Senedd Priorities](#)

HSC PSS 94

Ymateb gan: | Response from: Cymorth Cymru

Blaenoriaethau cychwynnol a nodwyd gan y Pwyllgor Initial priorities identified by the Committee

Mae'r Pwyllgor wedi nodi nifer o flaenoriaethau posibl ar gyfer ei waith yn ystod y Chweched Senedd, gan gynnwys: iechyd y cyhoedd a gwaith ataliol; y gweithlu iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol, gan gynnwys diwylliant sefydliadol a lles staff; mynediad at wasanaethau iechyd meddwl; arloesi ar sail tystiolaeth ym maes iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol; cymorth a gwasanaethau i ofalwyr di-dâl; mynediad at wasanaethau adsefydlu i'r rhai sydd wedi cael COVID ac i eraill; a mynediad at wasanaethau ar gyfer cyflyrau cronig tymor hir, gan gynnwys cyflyrau cyhyrsgerbydol.

The Committee has identified several potential priorities for work during the Sixth Senedd, including: public health and prevention; the health and social care workforce, including organisational culture and staff wellbeing; access to mental health services; evidence-based innovation in health and social care; support and services for unpaid carers; access to COVID and non-COVID rehabilitation services; and access to services for long-term chronic conditions, including musculoskeletal conditions.

C1. Pa rai o'r materion uchod ydych chi'n credu y dylai'r Pwyllgor roi blaenoriaeth iddynt, a pham?

Q1. Which of the issues listed above do you think should be a priority, and why?

Cymorth Cymru response to the Health and Social Care Committee

On behalf of third sector Supported Living provider members

September 2021

1. Introduction

1.1.1 Cymorth Cymru welcomes the opportunity to support the work of the Committee. Our response is on behalf of our third sector Supported Living providers, who are part of the Cymorth Cymru Learning Disability Interest Group network. Our response references and builds on the suggestions shared in our submission to the *Rebuilding Care and Support* consultation (please see attached).

2 Understanding the Supported Living model

2.1.1 Supported Living provides personalised, individual support for people with complex needs (including physical and learning disabilities) to live full, valued and independent lives in their local communities. Support providers often work in partnership with multidisciplinary teams, including health specialists.

2.1.2 Supported Living enables adults with support needs to live in their own home with the help they need to be independent, the model ensures people are able to choose where they want to live, who they live with, how they want to be supported and what happens in their own home.

2.1.3 Supported Living can cover a wide variety of settings, and may include some form of group living (for example, regulated activity by providers in care settings). Supported Living accommodation may be shared between several people and have communal space, or consist of separate units of self-contained accommodation – with or without communal space – but which may be located in shared buildings, such as a block of flats or on shared grounds.

2.1.4 Supported Living settings are different from residential care homes, individuals have own tenancies and the care provided is often via registered domiciliary care. Supported Living services involve tenure rights – renting or ownership, with associated occupancy rights. Some provide regulated ‘personal care’ and others support daily living activities such as help with shopping, food preparation, access to the community, or a combination of both. In some instances, home modifications or adaptations may be required, for example to receive deliveries or to support enablement.

3. Social value of not-for-profit service providers

3.1.1 Social care workers play a critical role in meeting the care needs of people, often in challenging and stressful situations. In particular, not-for-profit care and support providers play an important role in providing social value for the people they support and the communities they serve. They are often rooted in their communities, highly committed to the values within the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act and are not driven by profit or shareholders.

3.1.2 While recognising the importance of social value, it is also crucial to understand the factors that can undermine and inhibit the sector. Minimum wage and statutory sick pay devalue many of the frontline roles in the sector, and the language used around commissioning can focus on the price of services while failing to recognise the value involved in providing care.

4. Supported Living during COVID-19

4.1.1 The last eighteen months have been incredibly challenging for Supported Living services in Wales but the pandemic has also showcased the immense dedication of our workforce and incredible difference that this sector makes to people’s lives. The emergence of COVID-19 required services to adapt quickly to new challenges and make significant changes to service delivery within a very short period of time. Third sector services including Supported Living in the social care sector, demonstrated their flexibility and agility, making changes to policies and practice to enable them to meet the challenges of the pandemic. Leaders, managers and frontline staff in Supported Living settings have worked hard to manage the needs of service users; keeping people safe, minimising the risk of transmission of COVID-19 while safeguarding the wellbeing and rights of service users.

4.1.2 Unlike many other professions, due to the nature of the work, Supported Living staff have not been able to work from home during the pandemic, instead they continued to go out to work to provide vital care and support for service users, putting themselves and their families at risk of infection in order to keep services running. Many Supported Living settings saw staff go over and above what was expected of them during the pandemic; with some staff not seeing their families for extended periods in order to stay at work and keep the people they were supporting safe. The goodwill shown by staff needs to be rewarded with better pay and conditions in order to keep those staff in these vital services.

4.1.3 As well as delivering services around the clock, supported living providers have played an important strategic role, working closely with Welsh Government officials to develop guidance to help people living in Supported Living to stay safe during the pandemic, and helping to maintain contact with family and friends. <https://gov.wales/supported-living-guidance-coronavirus>

4.1.4 It is fair to say that understanding of the Supported Living sector in Welsh Government departments has increased since the start of the pandemic, largely due to the collaborative approach taken in the development of the guidance. However, it is important that this understanding continues to grow, and we welcome a continuation of that engagement with departments to ensure policy and decision makers are informed and knowledgeable about the intricacies of the Supported Living sector in Wales.

4.2 Supported Living and low COVID-19 infection levels

4.2.1 The relatively low transmission and mortality rates in Support Living settings (contrasted with high levels in care homes) demonstrates the further benefits of establishing smaller, more person-centred settings in Wales. The positive move from large institutions towards smaller settings that support independence and personal control via access to individual tenancies is already recognised as the preferred model for supporting independence.

4.2.2 Responses to COVID-19 have shown that smaller, local settings have also helped with infection control and transmission rates, with providers and support workers, tenants and their families working together to carry out risk assessments in order to keep people safe. The Supported Living guidance co-produced by support providers and Welsh Government has enabled providers to work with people living in supported living settings, and their families, to mitigate risk of infection and spread.

Recommendations:

- For the Committee to promote further understanding of the Supported Living model, being clear of the differences between health and social care, understanding that social care covers more than residential services for older people, and helping to promote understanding of the vital work done by support workers (including personal care, administration of medication, emotional support) and advocating for this vital work to be recognised and paid accordingly.
- For the Committee to invite Supported Living providers to give oral evidence regarding the social care workforce <https://business.senedd.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=429>

Key stakeholders: Cymorth Cymru Learning Disability Interest Group, Learning Disability Ministerial Advisory Group, Learning Disability Consortium, people using services, their families and carers.

Timescales: Ongoing

5. Social care and the Real Living Wage

5.1.1 Work has already begun to progress the programme for government commitment to pay social care workers the Real Living Wage (RLW), we believe the Committee has an important role to play in monitoring the roll out of the RLW to all parts of the social care workforce, in helping decision makers understand the complexities of the Supported Living sector, helping to understand the differences between Supported Living support and other social care models such as care homes.

5.1.2. We do not under-estimate the challenge of implementing the RLW commitment, but it is essential that this happens in a timely and fair manner. We believe that the Committee has a critical role in scrutinising this issue and should prioritise this in its workplan.

5.1.3 While increasing the pay of the lowest paid frontline workers is a clear priority, it is also important that the Welsh Government ensures that the rest of the workforce is also rewarded fairly. It is important when looking to establishing the RLW that consideration is given to the differential pay rates between frontline workers and managers in order to ensure managers are appropriately rewarded for the additional responsibilities they have in overseeing service delivery, this is critical for retention and progression in the social care workforce.

5.1.4 The Social Care Fair Work Forum plan to provide Ministers with recommendations in October 2021 and we would like to see clear plans set out for fair and timely implementation of the RLW as soon as possible.

Recommendations:

- For the Committee to scrutinise the roll out of the Real Living Wage for social care workers in Wales, ensuring staff in the Supported Living sector are included in the plans, and their work is understood and recognised. The Committee should also be mindful of the need to increase pay for staff with management responsibilities to ensure appropriate reward and progression routes within the social care sector.

Key stakeholders: Supported Living Providers, Social Care Fair Work Forum (SCFWF), National Provider Forum, Welsh Local Government Association

Timescales: SCFWF due to give recommendations in Oct 2021

6. Workforce sustainability – beyond the Real Living Wage

6.1.1 The Supported Living sector is facing the same staffing crisis currently affecting the wider social care sector, and while the commitment to pay social care staff the Real Living Wage is welcome, it will not solve the current recruitment and retention challenges.

6.1.2 The social care sector was already struggling going into the COVID-19 pandemic, and after 2 intense years the sector is in crisis. Staff already on low pay and unfair terms and conditions have continued to work through the pandemic in physically and emotionally draining situations. Paying the Real Living Wage is the minimum we should expect for people who have kept vital support services functioning in extremely difficult circumstances.

6.1.3 Employers are struggling to recruit staff for a number of related reasons, including competition from other sectors, with supermarkets and the cleaning sector offering comparable or higher wages for jobs which are less stressful and present a lower risk of infection. Services were able to continue to function during the pandemic due to the selfless actions of staff who gave up time with their own families in order to remain at work to keep service users safe need to be recognised and rewarded for that goodwill. Providers are agreed that the staffing crisis in the sector is beyond anything they have seen before; they are not only struggling with recruiting new staff, but are struggling to cover shifts as current staff are absent due to exhaustion and needing to take leave now that the pandemic is more under control. More needs to be done to ensure social care is an attractive and viable career option, in addition to improved pay and conditions there needs to be a focus on workforce development, with an improvement in recognition and progression.

7. Commissioning of services

7.1.1 In order to pay a fair and competitive wage for demanding social care roles, the overall amount of funding in the sector needs to increase. Current commissioning models focus on public sector set fees which tend to focus on outputs rather than outcomes. We fully understand the pressure Local Authorities have been under, with over a decade of public spending constraints having a significant impact on their finances and capacity. For service providers to be able to pay better wages, commissioners need to be able to award contracts that meet the needs of the population and they can only do this if there is further investment in the sector from the Welsh Government.

7.1.2 Service development needs to be informed by user need, which requires active engagement with service users. Our response to the recent *Rebalancing Care and Support* white paper highlighted the difficulties of working across 22 different Local Authorities and the risk of each authority

approaching service development in different ways. Current procurement processes add to the administrative burden of many providers, with relatively short contracts leading to the regular recommissioning of services.

7.1.3 The setting of a National Commissioning Framework for all Local Authorities, which incorporates the needs of users and supports longer contracts would help to ensure a consistent approach to commissioning and support longer term growth in the sector.

7.1.4 With the closure of day services during the pandemic, Supported Living settings which are struggling to deliver the commissioned services during the current staffing crisis are also facing daily requests to do more in order to support people unable to access the services previously available to them pre-pandemic, this is placing an added strain onto already stretched staffing and training budgets, and leaving service users without support.

7.1.5 The commissioning of services needs to move away from price to instead focus on quality and value, and on developing a system that enables commissioning practices to manage the market and focus on outcomes in a proactive rather than reactive way. There are many opportunities for reducing the complexity and wastage created by current commissioning practices. With 22 Local Authorities, support providers can spend a lot of time negotiating slightly different pay for social care staff across Wales, time and energy which could be better spent on service planning and delivery. We endorse the proposal set out the *Rebalancing Care and Support* white paper to establish a National Commissioning Framework, which incorporates the needs of users and supports longer contracts, and would help to ensure a consistent approach to commissioning and support longer term growth in the sector. This would help tackle the difficulties of working across 22 local authorities which can result in different guidance across Local Authorities and regions, meaning that some organisations are faced with having to treat staff unequally between locations.

Recommendations:

- For the Committee to consider the impact of commissioning approaches on the ability of service providers to deliver high quality services and retain a high-quality workforce.
- For the Committee to monitor the Welsh Government's response to the *Rebalancing Care and Support* white paper and to consider how the Committee's workplan for this Senedd term can support the development of good quality legislation, policy and/or guidance.

Key stakeholders: National Commissioning Board, WLGA, Service providers, National Provider Forum

Timescales: Annual Welsh Government budget cycle, legislative process resulting from *Rebalancing Care and Support* White Paper

8. Data

8.1.1 Care needs can change rapidly, services need the flexibility to be able to adapt to respond to changing needs in order for the market to be sustainable. We support the proposal in the recent *Rebalancing Care and Support* white paper for the need for real time population and market information to inform service planning. We recommend that any mapping needs to be as live as possible to ensure changes to population are noted as they happen and for the data to be available for use to enable collaboration, that data collection is not burdensome for providers, and that information is shared by relevant bodies to reduce duplication.

Recommendations:

- For the Committee to monitor and scrutinise work to develop more accurate and useful data to support effective delivery of social care services in Wales.

About Cymorth Cymru:

Cymorth Cymru is the representative body for providers of homelessness, housing and support services in Wales.

Our members provide a wide range of services that support people to overcome tough times, rebuild their confidence and live independently in their own homes. This includes people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, young people and care leavers, older people, people fleeing violence against women, domestic abuse or sexual violence, people living with a learning disability, people experiencing mental health problems, people with substance misuse issues and many more.

We act as the voice of the sector, influencing the development and implementation of policy, legislation and practice that affects our members and the people they support. We are committed to working with people who use services, our members and partners to effect change. We believe that together, we can have a greater impact on people's lives.

We want to be part of a social movement that ends homelessness and creates a Wales where everyone can live safely and independently in their own homes and thrive in their communities.

Website: www.cymorthcymru.org.uk

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