

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 129

**Ymateb gan: | Response from: Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru |
Welsh Local Government Association**



WLGA RESPONSE TO THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE COMMITTEE'S CONSULTATION ON PRIORITIES FOR THE SIXTH SENEDD



CLILC • WLGA

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About Us

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities and the three fire and rescue authorities are associate members.
2. The WLGA is a politically led cross-party organisation, with the leaders from all local authorities determining policy through the Executive Board and the wider WLGA Council. The WLGA also appoints senior members as Spokespersons and Deputy Spokespersons to provide a national lead on policy matters on behalf of local government.
3. The WLGA works closely with and is often advised by professional advisors and professional associations from local government, however, the WLGA is the representative body for local government and provides the collective, political voice of local government in Wales.

Introduction

4. In advance of the Senedd elections in 2021 the WLGA published its [Manifesto](#) which identifies the key priorities where we believe the Welsh Government can help councils deliver on national outcomes and prioritise services that matter most to the communities of Wales, empowering councils to reinvigorate and rebuild public services, communities and the economy post COVID-19.
5. The crisis has demonstrated councils' ability to respond irrespective of scale and reaffirmed the WLGA's stance on the importance of subsidiarity and localism, with elected members and officers deeply rooted in their local communities. The pandemic has shown that with freedom and flexibility and a relationship based on trust and mutual respect, councils can innovate and can deliver under the most challenging of circumstances. Throughout, councils have provided bold local leadership and vision:
 - Councils have worked with the NHS and local partners, leading and coordinating the local response and have contributed to the national response to the pandemic;
 - Councils have shown what is possible when leadership is rooted in local communities. When rapid action was needed, councils delivered it for their communities;
 - Councils have created new services, worked with partners and protected the most vulnerable in their communities; and

- The Welsh Government, the NHS and local and national partners have relied on councils, turning to them when challenges have been faced and urgent solutions have been required. Councils have demonstrated flexibility, innovation, resilience and responsiveness.
6. Councils seek a commitment from the Welsh Government and the Senedd to the principle of local democracy and subsidiarity:
- A future Welsh Government and Senedd should commit to the European Charter of Local Self Government and the principle of subsidiarity, where the presumption is that power is transferred to the level of government closest to the people;
 - A commitment to provide councils with maximum local freedom and flexibility and minimal direction or prescription;
 - A commitment to strengthen local accountability and local democratic oversight in local, regional and national public bodies;
 - A recognition that the Welsh Government has a clear national strategic role and sets national outcomes, but councils are best placed to determine what services are prioritised locally and how they are best delivered;
 - A recommitment to the Collaboration Principles, whereby collaboration is locally-led to improve outcomes and is a means to an end not an end in itself.
7. Councils also seek fair and flexible funding – councils need greater fiscal autonomy and flexibility to respond to local needs and priorities:
- Councils need powers to explore other sources of income from fees and charges;
 - Discretionary powers to raise new taxes to tackle specific local issues;
 - A new Welsh Government should:
 - commit to ending all specific grants within 12 months and channelling all monies released direct to councils via the Revenue Support Grant – councils need maximum discretion over funding to meet local needs and priorities;
 - work with local government to satisfy itself that funding is sustainable, and its distribution is equitable and fit for purpose;
 - fully cost and fund all new national initiatives, legislation and pay pressures;
 - commit to multiyear financial settlements, so councils can plan more effectively.
8. The WLGA welcomes the opportunity to help inform the Committee’s Forward Work Programme and we have identified a number of key priority areas we believe should be considered both over the next 12 to 18 months and in the longer-term work programme.
9. The priorities set out in our manifesto are an important starting point as these will help local authorities respond to local challenges and needs and contribute to the delivery of national ambitions and outcomes. More importantly they will help local councils deliver on the priorities of their own local communities. The consultation outlines a number of areas that the Committee may wish to include in the longer-term work programme and we would particularly support the priority areas of: the health and social care workforce; access to mental health services; and support and services for unpaid carers.

Key Priority Areas

10. The recent experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp relief the challenges facing social care, many of which existed long before the pandemic. But it has also powerfully underlined the essential value of social care in helping people to live the lives they want to lead. Recovery from COVID-19 will inevitably dominate the work of local government and the social care sector for much of 2021-22 and going into 2022-23 and it will need to be a key feature of any activity undertaken by the Committee.
11. COVID-19 highlighted just how essential social care is in supporting people to be as independent as possible. The issues facing social care – particularly the increase in demand, scale of funding pressures and workforce challenges – are just as pressing now as they were before COVID, with many having been exacerbated by the pandemic. An examination of the future funding of social care in Wales in order to ensure the future sustainability of the sector is needed and should be one of the key priorities for the Committee.
12. Health and social care are equally important and decisions and prioritisations about the future of each should reflect that. The needs of one should not be addressed to the detriment of the other and both should unite around embedding a far more preventative approach to wellbeing that works closely with public health and housing. An examination of the role of preventative services and how best they can be provided and supported would be beneficial.
13. It will be essential that the Welsh Government works with local government and its many partners as equals in helping to build resilient communities that are geared towards prevention, wellbeing and public health. One of the key issues for the new Welsh Government will be how to shift the priorities from hospitals to prevention and public health. It has been the WLGA's policy that the latter function should be located in local government as is the case in England.
14. What is also needed from Welsh Government is support to help enable local areas to retain the positive changes they made at the height of the pandemic and build on what we know works, such as prevention, reablement, technology and more person-centred care and support.
15. We believe the future reform of social care and support needs to start with the most urgent priorities which are focussed on delivering good quality and sustainable social care services and are areas that the Committee should focus its work on. These can form the basis for ensuring the very best local care and support in the future. The WLGA's manifesto therefore called on the Welsh Government to:
 - Provide long-term sustainable funding for social care services. Long term revenue and capital funding for social services must be agreed which matches the scale and ambition of the 21st Century School Modernisation programme and the significant capital investment in hospitals in Wales. This requires strategic planning and is crucial for enhancing preventative services to support delivery of *A Healthier Wales*.

- Value and invest in the social care workforce, realising the need of parity of esteem with NHS workers, including ensuring the workforce is appropriately rewarded for the invaluable work that they do and have a pathway to career progression within a professionalised care sector. There must be an ambition and the resources made available to pay the Real Living Wage for the whole social care sector as a minimum.
 - As an equal partner to the NHS, trust and empower local government to deliver and meet the needs of local communities. To progress *A Healthier Wales* accelerate the move - away from health systems centred around hospitals – to ones where health and social care systems focus on place-based communities; primary and community services and wellbeing, addressing people’s physical health, mental health and social needs together.
 - Continue to support councils as they seek to intervene with families earlier and prevent problems from escalating. Welsh Government must ensure councils are able to invest in preventative, universal and early help services so children, young people and families receive the practical, emotional, educational and mental health support they need, as soon as they need it.
16. The Government should continue to work with all social care partners, including people with lived experience including unpaid carers, and on a cross-party basis, on the vision and scope of social care reform. This work should consider the incentives and barriers to creating more person-centred services, including those that help prevent, delay or reduce the need for more formal care services.
17. The UK Government’s announcement on 7 September 2021 which set out their [new plan](#) for healthcare, adult social care and their funding plan, will result in Wales benefitting from £700m from the additional funding raised. This additional funding provides the prospect of a significant opportunity for Wales to reform the social care system and help tackle the urgent priorities set out above.
18. Local government has been broadly supportive of the commitments made in the *Programme for Government* that relate to social care and is committed to working with Welsh Government to achieve these ambitions. The WLGA also responded to the White Paper consultation on *Rebalancing Care and Support*, which identified proposals for change, such as a national framework and changes to the role of RPBs. Both of these documents set out Welsh Government’s future direction of travel for social care in Wales and increased investment brings opportunities to develop sustainable long-term solutions, which should be central to the Committee’s focus and priorities.