

**Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#)
ar y [gweithlu Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#)**

**This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care](#)
[Committee](#) consultation on [Health and Social Care Workforce](#)**

HSC 52

Ymateb gan: | Response from: Leonard Cheshire



Health and Social Care Workforce Response

About Leonard Cheshire

We are Leonard Cheshire – supporting individuals to live, learn and work as independently as they choose, whatever their ability. Led by people with experience of disability, we are at the heart of local life – opening doors to opportunity, choice and support in communities around the globe.

Leonard Cheshire is one of the UK's largest voluntary sector providers of services for disabled people. We work in local communities to provide people with opportunity, choice and support. We have accommodation services – including supported living and registered care homes; and social, education and leisure services – including day support, community outreach services and respite support.

Plans for implementation of *A healthier Wales: our workforce strategy for health and social care* (published in October 2020), including progress made to date and whether delivery is on track for 2030.

Leonard Cheshire welcomes the implementation of a workforce strategy to address the staffing and retention issues the social care workforce has been experiencing for the past decade. Going forward, the focus of this strategy should be on establishing parity of pay with the National Health Service, to achieve equality of value in Welsh society. Many of the workforce challenges social care is facing will be alleviated by better rates of pay and improved terms and conditions for carers.

Social care staff were at the frontline of the pandemic, many providing 24/7 support. At the peak of the crisis, it was widely recognised that their vital work had previously been hugely undervalued. Long-term underfunding, recruitment and retention problems in the sector were compounded by a national emergency that tested the endurance of even the most dedicated staff. The Social Care sector in Wales is currently in an unprecedented recruitment crisis which means social care needs urgent investment right now to prevent the system from collapse, as well as a sustainable long-term funding solution. Reforming social care should begin with an immediate pay rise, including an agreed timeline to move to parity with the NHS for the same roles over the next Senedd term, a revised career structure; better training and development opportunities.

The strategy proposed by Welsh Government does not detail any concrete plans for implementation, and Leonard Cheshire would seek further clarity before commenting on progress towards 2030. However, there is a distinct need to improve pay for carers in Wales and this should be the priority for Welsh Government.

Welsh Labour committed in their manifesto to increasing pay for care workers in Wales to the Foundation Living Wage of £9.50 an hour. UNISON Cymru Wales has highlighted the urgency of this matter and called for Welsh Government to immediately lift care workers out of in-work poverty. UNISON represents thousands of care workers in Wales and says Welsh government must now enact its manifesto commitment to pay all care workers the Foundation Living Wage and move to NHS-level rates of pay as soon as possible.

A poll commissioned by UNISON Cymru Wales in April found 90 per cent of the public believe the care workforce in Wales should be paid at least £9.50 or more, and 72 per cent of the Welsh public would support the creation of a National Care Service, similar to the NHS, to deliver social care for older, disabled and vulnerable people¹.

Fewer than half of the personal care workforce in Wales earn the Real Living Wage. And given that approximately 80% of workers in the residential care sector are women, this has a particularly gendered impact².

In principle, the plans set out in the strategy and the corresponding actions are a promising step. Leonard Cheshire calls on the Welsh Government to increase pay for care workers to a minimum of £9.50 an hour and publish a comprehensive action plan on how and when each of these actions will be executed to improve prospects for our care service.

The alignment of the strategy and its implementation with other priorities and actions, including those identified in the *Welsh Government's Programme for Government for 2021-2026*, and *A Healthier Wales: our Plan for Health and Social Care (2018)*.

The proposals in the strategy align to the Welsh Government's other publications and strategies. However, without a clear plan for implementation, there is a risk of this strategy not retaining accountability.

Leonard Cheshire welcomes the review of progress towards this strategy at 3 year increments. This must be conducted in partnership with a range of third sector organisations and delivery partners to ensure full transparency on progress.

¹ Savanta ComRes interviewed 1,021 Welsh adults aged 16+ online on behalf of UNISON Cymru from 1 to 7 April 2021. Data were weighted to be representative of Welsh adults by age, gender, region and SEG.

² Cardiff University, Wales Fiscal Analysis. 2020. *The future of care in Wales: Resourcing social care for older adults*. Link: https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/2427400/social_care_final2_aug20.pdf

The extent to which HEIW/SCW's workforce strategy and broader work on workforce planning and the commissioning/delivery of education and training, will ensure that we have a health and social care workforce which is able to meet population health and care needs, and support new models of care and ways of working, including optimising the use of digital technology and the development of Welsh language services.

Leonard Cheshire supports the actions for use of digital technology to improve services in the care sector. It is imperative that this strategy has actions for disabled people and vulnerable adults in receipt of care, especially if care systems they may interact with are becoming digital. Further clarity on digital technology for care users as well as staff would be welcomed to ensure that the strategy is holistic and as comprehensive as possible.

The extent to which the strategy and its implementation are inclusive, reflect the needs/contribution of the whole workforce—for example, on the basis of profession, stage of career or protected characteristics—and also take into account the role of unpaid carers and volunteers.

The strategy fails to mention the role of unpaid carers in the sector with any detail or focus. Unpaid carers represent the largest source of care provision. The replacement cost (the cost of purchasing this care at market price) is estimated at £8 billion – a similar order of magnitude to the annual NHS Wales budget³. The strategy's lack of focus on the vital role played by unpaid carers needs to be addressed.

Whether there are any specific areas within the strategy that would benefit from focused follow up work by the Committee.

Leonard Cheshire would recommend that follow-up work is conducted into digital technology provision across Wales. Many care services and local authorities operate in rural parts of Wales. To ensure they can fully benefit from this strategy and the innovation of digital technology, an audit must be completed of current provision pan-Wales.

Further development needs to take place on the National Careers Service webtool. Without parity of pay between health and social care, this recruitment tool will only serve to increase competition between health and social care. Issues of competition surrounding pay in social care are already causing a detrimental effect on staffing in service providers. Local authorities in some areas of Wales are advertising caring roles at £11 an hour. This causes other care providers to lose out on staff as they are only being funded by the same local authorities to advertise jobs at £9 an hour. Without sufficient funding, social care providers cannot compete with health services, NHS salaries, or local authorities causing nation-wide shortages.

³ Cardiff University, Wales Fiscal Analysis. 2020. *The future of care in Wales: Resourcing social care for older adults*. Link: https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/2427400/social_care_final2_aug20.pdf

Leonard Cheshire recommends that the Committee conducts further analysis on procurement practices, and how these decisions have knock-on effects on the level of care, service quality, and competitive culture between providers. Welsh Government should impose a Foundation Minimum Wage for all care providers to be able to win contracts. This would ensure a level playing field, in which care staff are adequately paid for their role and reducing in-work poverty. It would also ensure that providers cannot use staff wages as a bargaining tool to win contracts.