

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a
Sgiliau
Partneriaeth Sgiliau Rhanbarthol
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Ymateb gan Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cymru

National Assembly for Wales
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills
Committee
Regional Skills Partnerships

Evidence from Social Care Wales

Written Evidence for the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee Inquiry into the Regional Skills Partnerships.

This response is from Social Care Wales.

Social Care Wales was established (under the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2014) in April 2017 bringing together social care workforce regulation, workforce development and service improvement in one organisation. We will have an influential role in shaping research priorities and building strong links with stakeholders to improve care and support. Social Care Wales also has a responsibility for the development of the workforce in the social care and early years sector. Our work aims to support the priorities for the well-being of future generations for the sector, the public and Welsh Government.

Our three strategic aims below define what we do:

- providing public confidence
- leading and supporting improvement
- developing the workforce

Is the data and evidence being used by the Regional Skills Partnerships timely, valid and reliable? Have there been any issues?

As we have outlined in a recent publication¹, adult social care contributes £1.2 billion directly to the Welsh economy and a wider contribution of £2.2 billion, and around 83,400 people work in adult social care, which makes it the seventh largest employment sector in terms of the number of jobs in Wales. These numbers include estimates of people employed by individuals in receipt of Direct

¹ The Economic Value of the Adult Social Care sector – Wales (June 2018)

Payments or who purchase care or support from people in their communities rather than through services commissioned by health boards or local authorities. In total the social care sector as a whole employs around 90,520 people with another 23,300 offering services in early years, the Foundation Phase and playwork across Wales. This is higher than the NHS in Wales. In a UK context, Wales has the highest proportion of the workforce employed in adult social care. The sector is a growth sector with a 4% year on year growth expected until 2023. It underpins the foundational economy in Wales and accounts for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the priority areas for ***Prosperity for All***.

We believe it is important for any regional and national data and evidence to be supplemented with sector specific intelligence, evidence and data to give a rounded picture of skills needs.

In our experience the situation around data and evidence differs considerably across Regional Skills Partnerships. Two of them are fully engaged with our sector (through employer or cluster groups) specifically with or through us. In these situations these partnerships produce reasonably well-evidenced reports and we have been offered the opportunity to sense check some of these reports for accuracy, prior to publication. This has provided an opportunity to help improve the quality of data and evidence; providing data sources that may be more accurate or timely and sector specific intelligence. We would welcome clarification on a consistent and timely approach to collating data, evidence and intelligence that could be shared with all relevant stakeholders.

The landscape around various structures supporting health and social care and learning and skills can be complex, often with different boundaries or footprints. It would be beneficial if the RSPs used or built on existing statutory partnerships, created under Part 9 of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 as a conduit for more collaborative and joint working with our sector. This variability of experience would support the recommendations in the Graystone Report for consistent, clear, open and transparent processes and mechanisms across Wales. This will become even more significant with the City and Growth Deals and the much greater power and responsibilities likely to be placed on the Skills Partnership resulting from the proposed Tertiary Research and Education Commission.

How well do the partnerships engage with and take into account the views of those who do not sit on the partnership boards, and how well do they account for the views of the skills providers themselves?

We would support many of the recommendations and suggestions within the report on the Governance of Regional Skills Partnerships offered by Dr John Graystone in March 2018. Specifically in respect of openness and transparency, the responsibilities and accountabilities being clear (beyond members of the partnerships to employers and other significant players) and encourage the development of employer based forums to inform all the work of the partnerships. Again this varies across Wales in our experience and where there are either sector specific, or more generic employer forums we have more confidence that views of people who do not sit on boards, and indeed of all sectors, have been heard and represented. This is not consistent across all 3 RSPs.

The views of learning providers and learners are important but assurances and balance needs to be achieved in terms of the employers' voice. If we are to see proper transformation then the voice of employers, regulators and other relevant bodies need to be guaranteed so that learner provision is aligned to industry requirements, employment forecasts and economic prosperity in practice, this varies from partnership to partnership. The outcomes and implementation arising from the **Parliamentary Review on Health and Social Care in Wales**² and **A Healthier Wales**³ raises many challenges for the delivery of services in different ways and therefore for the learning and development of the workforce. This is replicated across the delivery of the Workforce Plan for childcare, play and early years in Wales⁴. These policies will need both National and local responses across the funding and delivery of Post Compulsory Education and Training sector to address. There are good examples of this, where one RSP has recognised the importance of the regulatory changes in social care⁵ and has provided priority status and support to upskill the workforce.

² A Revolution from Within: Transforming Health and Social Care In Wales Jan 2018
<https://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/180116reviewen.pdf>

³ A Healthier Wales: Our Plan for Health and Social Care June 2018
<https://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/180608healthier-wales-mainen.pdf>

⁴ Workforce Plan for childcare, play and early years in Wales
<https://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/cyp/171215-childcare-play-early-years-workforce-plan-en.pdf>

⁵ Regional Employment and Skills Plan for South West and Mid Wales 2017

An example of this not working so well is contained within the North Wales Growth Deal⁶. Money has been allocated to develop a programme of learning within Higher Education establishments in North Wales to upskill the health and social care workforce. This appeared without prior consultation with social services or health employers in the region, and certainly without the knowledge or support of the statutory workforce board, the Regional Health and Social Care Workforce Board. This would not have been a priority in terms of the workforce needs in either sub sector, and there is concern from the sectors as to whether the HEIs would be best placed to meet the CPD needs of the workforce. This is one example where the views of employers were not sought or considered and supports the need for better engagement and transparency.

How do the key City and Growth Deal roles of the Regional Skills Partnerships influence their Welsh Government remit?

We cannot offer any real insight into this since we have no direct experience of it.

Are the Regional Skills Partnerships able to actually reflect current and future skills demands within their regions? What about very specialised skills for which there may be low volumes of demand?

Again this varies from region to region and it works best where there is real engagement with employers or organisations that can truly represent employers or are leaders or regulators in the sector. For this to be real and meaningful, consistent and effective engagement with employers and or other groups such as workforce regulators needs to be better, across Wales and across all sectors. In our experience even where there are cluster groups the meetings can be inconsistent in approaches. For national organisations and employers there would be benefit in creating some consistency. We would support a Wales wide benchmark to the processes and approaches that allow a degree of flexibility, learning across regions and in addition to those specific benchmarks that add regional value.

⁶https://northwaleseab.co.uk/sites/nweab/files/documents/growth_plan_doc_5_final.8.feb_.2018english.cleaned.pdf accessed 20/2/2019

Do the Regional Skills partnerships have sufficient knowledge and understanding of:

- the foundational economy and the needs of those employed within it;

We do not think this is always the case. The role of social care, early years childcare and mental health, within the foundation economy, is crystallised within *Prosperity for All*⁷. The direct links between the employability strand of work and the Chief Regional Officers to the Regional Skills Partnerships remain unclear. This link and joint work is essential to ensure that strategic planning to wider policy direction is essential, e.g. the links and priority sectors noted in ***Prosperity for All***⁸ and the Employability Plan⁹ should be considered **as** important, as high profile large capital or inward investment projects. This is not consistent across Wales.

- the demand for skills provision through the medium of Welsh?

In our experience, the discussions around Welsh medium provision have been very limited, within the board(s) or cluster groups themselves. While there are commitments across the various Growth Deal bids to supporting Welsh Language and culture, how this will actually happen is much less clear. If this is to be meaningful full engagement with employers will be required and much greater engagement with projects such as Work in Welsh and the More than Just Words (both of which we are actively involved in) will be required. As a sector leader we have worked with employers, learning providers and learners to emphasise the importance of the Welsh language and working bilingually across health and social care and to support people to develop or become more confident in using their Welsh language skills.

Are the Regional Skills Partnerships adequately resourced to fulfil their growing role?

We fell unable to make comment on this since we have no direct experience of it.

⁷ Welsh Government Prosperity for All: the national strategy (2017)

⁸ Prosperity for All: A National Strategy Sept 2017 <https://gov.wales/docs/strategies/170919-prosperity-for-all-en.pdf>

⁹ Prosperity for All: Economic Action Plan May 2018 <https://gov.wales/docs/det/publications/171213-economic-action-plan-en.pdf>

Is there an appropriate balance between the work of the RSPs and wider views on skills demand?

See our comments above. The role of the Chief Regional Officers around employability and the foundational economy could be critical to making this happen.

Is the level of operational detail set out by Welsh Government for skills provision in higher/further education and work-based learning providers appropriate?

We cannot comment on this since we are not aware what has been shared with the RSPs. We would however refer you to our comments above and we have some reservations about RSPs allocating funding based on incomplete data, evidence or intelligence. We have recently launched a report on the **Economic Value of Adult Social Care Wales**¹⁰ which provides further information of various economic indicators for our sector in Wales, it is estimated that it is worth £2billion per year to the Welsh economy (without the health sector) and therefore it must be seen as significant in terms of skills provision and funding. We currently have over a third of all apprenticeships in Wales and more Higher Apprenticeship than any other sector. This is not consistently reflected across of 3 RPS plans.

If there are any, how are tensions between learner demand / learner progression reconciled with Regional Skills Partnership conclusions and the Welsh Government preference for funding higher level skills?

We will continue to play our part in taking A Healthier Wales: our plan for health and social care¹¹ forward and fully support the Welsh Government's call to establish "a sustainable social care sector, which provides important employment and career opportunities as part of the foundational economy in many communities". A seamless health and social care system should help to achieve parity between health and social care employees, improve terms and conditions and raise the profile of the social care sector. This requires ongoing skills funding at the levels required by the sector and funding a sustainable and resilient social care sector will require new and innovative solutions not only for services but for skills development funding. We have been working with Welsh Government for

¹⁰ <https://socialcare.wales/resources/the-economic-value-of-the-adult-social-care-sector-wales>

¹¹ Welsh Government A Healthier Wales: our Plan for Health and Social Care (2018)

some time now to provide evidence of the importance of retaining L2 apprenticeship funding for our sector, since this is the industry requirement and this is one example of the Government Policy and preference being at odds with our sector's needs and thus with the RSP agenda. We welcome opportunities to explore solutions with policy colleagues nationally and regionally to respond to the needs of the sector, and ultimately to support citizens.

Have the Regional Skills Partnerships and Welsh Government been able to stimulate changes in skills provision 'on the ground' to reflect demand?

We have not seen evidence of this from our sector to date.