

A HEALTHIER WALES – A WORKFORCE STRATEGY FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

SUPPORTING THE WINTER PROTECTION PLAN

Health Education and Improvement Wales and Social Care Wales have developed a [workforce strategy for health and social care](#) which was commissioned by the Welsh Government to support implementation of A Healthier Wales. This has been achieved with significant engagement and contributions from staff, partners and stakeholders, and provides a framework and direction for the next 10 years.

Strategies are only useful if they lead to action and improvement. Action from the draft workforce strategy has already been taken, within areas such as leadership, and wellbeing. COVID-19 has escalated our work in some of these areas as set out in HEIW's quarterly plans and in Social Care Wales 2020/2021 business plan. Particular examples include

- the [extensive resources](#) we have designed and implemented to support staff well-being,
- the development of our draft leadership principles for health and social care,
- our work to address specific workforce shortages, including mobilisation of students and returners to the temporary register,
- increased flexibility and availability of education and training, and
- our work to attract and widen access for people into health and care careers.

COVID-19 has also seen a huge change in many areas, in the way we deliver our services which has been underpinned by digital and virtual technology to support new ways of working.

The pandemic has reinforced the case for change that underpins the strategy, and the golden thread of wellbeing that runs throughout the themes and actions. We have seen such bravery, courage, compassion and professionalism from our people over recent months, and in return we need to put in place the support they need, by implementing the commitments set out in the strategy with pace and energy.

COVID-19 brought into sharp focus the issues of parity of esteem between health and social care workforce and the need to protect the safety and wellbeing of our people particularly those at the front line of service provision. It has highlighted the need for increased focus on the diversity of our workforce, and the additional vulnerability some groups particularly our BAME colleagues have faced. It has reinforced the benefit of developing a compassionate leadership approach at all levels, developing an inclusive and diverse culture, reflective of our local communities, where staff well-being is paramount and each individual feels they are supported and belong.

This document represents a first phase implementation plan for HEIW and Social Care Wales in relation to our contribution to the WFS. It sets out clear actions, for 2020/2021 to support transformation across the health and social care workforce and enhance our winter resilience. It builds urgency and specific actions under the seven key themes of the strategy, allowing for early implementation building towards our longer term and more sustainable goals.

Given the immediate focus of this document on the next 6 months it is not feasible or desirable to take a “joint” approach to all of the actions. Where this is the case we will still be working closely together to share good practice and lessons learned to scale up our ability to deliver system improvement.

AN ENGAGED MOTIVATED AND HEALTHY WORKFORCE

The wellbeing of our people continues to be front and centre of our thinking. As a system we need to ensure that we continue to protect and support the staff who have been caring for COVID-19 patients and citizens in NHS and social care settings, as well as the rest of our workforce who have had to adapt with immediate effect to new ways of more remote and virtual working. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on our BAME colleagues and other vulnerable groups has highlighted existing and deep-rooted inequalities that we need to address.

This needs to be a joint approach with employers taking a leading role. However, there are also key contributions that HEIW and Social Care Wales need to make. During COVID-19, HEIW made available a range of resources to support staff wellbeing. A 'one-stop shop' was hosted on HEIW's website which provided a range of best practice guidance, self-help resources, as well as access to specialist help for colleagues such as counselling, PTSD and Samaritans support. We are continually evaluating these to understand and embed the benefits into practice. We also need to support employers to adopt guidance and best practice in relation to staff wellbeing and staff safety, backed up by effective access to Occupational Health Services where required.

Social Care Wales made an immediate response to the pandemic with dedicated wellbeing resources for the social care sector available on the Social Care Wales website, through regular newsletters going directly to registered persons and a newly created social care worker card, providing a form of identification which enabled access to a range of tangible benefits with retailers and access to a variety of well-being support.

As well as establishing a social care wellbeing network to share intelligence and solutions to support wellbeing, Social Care Wales are commissioning on behalf of Welsh Government an Employee Assistance Programme, which will be live from December 2020, targeted at workers who may not have access to support available from statutory or larger employers.

We have also been engaging our people in the early stages of developing our staff governance frameworks, which sets out the expectations staff can have of their employer, and the expectations the employer can have from their staff. We are also improving the ways in which we measure staff experience by encouraging more local immediate feedback loops, as well as formal surveys, which was a key action (action 4) in the strategy. Continuing this, is of critical importance, and our efforts, spread and speed in this area over the COVID-19 experience needs to be maintained.

By March 2021 HEIW will

- Develop and launch an NHS staff governance framework which will set out expectations for both employers and our people to drive positive employee experience and improved quality
- Increase staff voice through streamlining and improving staff feedback mechanisms including the Medical Engagement Scale and NHS Wales staff survey alongside local surveys and feedback mechanisms
- Progress the findings of the 2020 NHS Occupational Health review.
- Continue to provide guidance and support to contribute to employer guidance in relation to wellbeing including infection control, PPE, vaccinations, risk assessments, home working, rest and respite.
- Continually develop our excellent tools and digital resources to support physical and mental wellbeing and create targeted resources for staff who are identified in 'at-risk' groups.
- Develop robust ways of capturing the outputs of risk assessments particularly for BAME colleagues and ensure that this information supports decision making at local levels.

By March 2021 Social Care Wales will

- Continue to add to and refine the range of wellbeing resources available via our website
- Continue to facilitate a social wellbeing network
- Further develop the social care worker card into a long term solution for the social care sector to provide recognition as a social care workers and access a range of benefits and wellbeing resources
- Implement a consistent approach to monitoring and measuring employee experience through social care staff surveys.
- Improve our offer to registered people, supporting professional recognition, digital learning and personal development including promoting positive wellbeing for the workforce
- Consider how the health and wellbeing framework may offer independent support to registered persons through any fitness to practise procedure
- Launch and manage an employee assistance programme for the social care sector

By March 2021 together we will

- Ensure that our Health and Wellbeing Framework and Staff Governance Framework are based on common principles or approaches.
- Share good practice and resources between health and social care to drive improvement

We entered this pandemic with a workforce shortage across health and social care. Although there has been huge commitment to the creation of a “temporary” workforce this is not sustainable as we need to avoid long term impact on the students and trainees involved. In addition international recruitment may have additional challenges for some time to come. Consequently we need to embrace the opportunity that has arisen from the pandemic in putting a spotlight on working in health and social care - the profile of job opportunities and careers in this sector has never been higher.

We need vibrant and authentic promotional campaigns to underline the value of working in health and social care, the close connections to local communities, and to reinforce the diversity of roles, work and working patterns that exist. We need to focus our careers services on flexibility of access points and pathways, welcoming all and encouraging people to consider this even at later stages in their lives.

We need to capitalise on the renewed interest in NHS and social care careers as well as ensure that we offer flexibility and excellent practices to retain our existing staff, particularly those who are over 55. Along with ensuring excellent employment practices, we need to attract people into pre-registration training programmes and to develop our ‘grow your own’ schemes, where people can earn as they learn.

By March 2021 HEIW will

- Take responsibility for Train Work Live and scope future national campaigns to attract people to the NHS.
- Review and expand the widening access work programme following the transfer to HEIW from Welsh Government.
- Continue to develop and expand our NHS Careers digital solution to increase the available information and resources, promoting careers in NHS Wales.
- Develop guidance for agile and flexible working, for employers and our people, and flexible by default approaches for HEIW
- Develop targeted retention initiatives aimed initially to the post 55 workforce to ensure we maintain valuable experience of our registered staff, providing ‘careers for life’ which support the changing needs and life experiences of our people.
- Accelerate our ‘grow your own’ schemes, and expand the approach into other professional areas
- Commence a review of NHS Wales’s end to end recruitment practices to reflect expectations of a modern employer and ensure we attract and pay attention to diversity, welsh culture and language.

By March 2021 Social Care Wales will

- Continue to develop the WeCare Wales website and jobs portal including additional video content promoting sector champions
- Deliver further social media and TV based campaign bursts
- Develop schools based resources to promote careers in social care
- Develop values based resources to support employers recruitment practice
- Capture positive practice and processes regarding recruitment and retention to share nationally
- Recruit and support further WeCare Wales ambassadors
- Continue to financially support the care career connector posts in the 7 regions
- Work with key stakeholders such as Department of Work and Pensions and Careers Wales to strengthen links between job seekers and careers in social care

By March 2021 together we will

- Further develop the Careers Network links and connections between careers approaches in health and social care to maximise our reach
- Share good practice and resources to drive improvement in recruitment and retention across the sectors

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Seamless Working
Models

SEAMLESS WORKING MODELS

Developing a health and social care workforce to provide services closer to home is a key commitment in the workforce strategy, with a particular focus on the new model of primary care, 'Together for Mental Health' and the new integrated service models being developed through Regional Partnership Boards. COVID-19 has accelerated some of this, with many service models adjusting to address social distancing. It is essential that our people have the right skills and training to work in that way on a sustainable basis.

We have also seen the critical importance of seamless working to support individuals living in care homes which is such a key part of the health and social care system but lacks a coherent workforce development plan.

We have refreshed and launched the delegation framework to support teams and professionals to work together during the pandemic, and this remains relevant to underpin cross profession and cross sector working.

Roles have been blended, expanded and extended to meet the need, and our staff have risen positively to this challenge. We have identified opportunities through this experience, to enhance our work to support primary care and social care at pace, through building on the work undertaken by local authorities, health boards and trusts to support both sectors with training, staff where appropriate, and joint planning.

We now need to build on the new service models that have been accelerated outside hospitals and support them with effective and sustainable workforce models at pace, equipping staff with the skills and training needed to ensure that we don't revert back to old ways of working.

By March 2021 HEIW will

- Support the multi professional workforce in primary care by the roll out of primary care training hubs across Wales

By March 2021 Social Care Wales will

- SCW will develop a workforce plan for direct care workforce
- SCW will develop a workforce plan for the social work profession including a new post qualification framework

By March 2021 together we will

- Progress priorities for the mental health workforce and scope the development of a longer term workforce plan
- Evaluate the impact of the joint induction training pilot for front line H&SC workers with Hywel Dda HB and social care partners.
- Develop new learning tools to support effective hospital discharge from the pilot with Aneurin Bevan and social care partners
- Continue to roll out training and development across the care home sector to upskill staff to meet the requirements of the pandemic

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sy'n barod yn ddigidol
Building a Digitally
Ready Workforce

BUILDING A DIGITALLY READY WORKFORCE

This is potentially the biggest enabler for change affecting the workforce and services. The effect of lockdown on services, and the need for social distancing has led to a dramatic change in the way we work, enabled and reliant on digital technology. From 'Team' and 'Skype' meetings, to GP online consultations, and remote triage and

assessment many of our staff have rapidly adapted and learnt new skills. These new ways of working will need to be evaluated but it is clear we have taken a huge leap forward – we now need to ensure that staff are able to practice in this way safely and effectively.

We have also seen a huge shift in how we access training and learning on line using virtual teaching and resources. This has been a revelation in terms of its effectiveness and accessibility and has proven its worth as a fundamental plank of our blended learning approach to education and training.

Our experience and rapid increase in adapting to the use of digital technology to support our services, has supported the changing culture in ways we would not have anticipated even six months ago when submitting the draft strategy. Our role in this is to ensure that we have a digitally ready workforce, who have the skills to be able to embrace this technology, and that the education we provide is delivered through blended learning, includes simulation and is reflective of these new ways of working. This applies to our existing workforce as much as the new workforce that are currently in training.

By March 2021 HEIW will

- Scope the “Building a Digitally Ready Workforce Programme” focused on enhancing the digital literacy and confidence of the health workforce in Wales.
- Target the clinical and non-clinical skills needed to assess, triage, consult through technology with appropriate training programmes
- Invest in on-line learning to support grow your own and pre-registration learning programmes to enhance flexibility in commencement and support flexible working and learning arrangements.

By March 2021 Social Care Wales will

- Develop plans for the creation of a digital learning platform
- Provide flexible approaches to learning and ensure appropriate support is in place
- Review the Continuing Professional Development requirements of registration so that online learning is seamlessly incorporated into renewal processes.
- Accelerate our transformation into a more user-led organisation and maximise the effectiveness of our digital offer to external customers.
- Work with DPSWales to understand the potential to use digital transformation in adult social care, via a pilot programme.

By March 2021 together we will

- Share learning on development of digital literacy and skills for current and future workforce
- Work with partners to increase the availability and catalogue of virtual learning solutions, including e-learning, virtual classroom and simulation.
- Provide opportunities to pilot the delivery of digitally based learning content.
- Undertake a lessons learnt exercise from the DPSW pilot (above) to inform future digital service improvements

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Excellent Education
& Learning

EXCELLENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The fragility of the workforce during the pandemic has underlined the importance of continuing to invest in the education and training of professions across the health and social care system, as well as reinforcing the need for a flexible and generalist focus for this. The nature and content of the education and training needs to equip students and trainees for their future work, in the “new normal”.

For our current students and trainees there has been some disruption to current education and training programmes which we have sought to minimise through close working with regulators, awarding organisations, training providers, colleges and universities. Trainees and students have cooperated with these changes and in some cases have stepped up to support the COVID -19 plans. However this is not sustainable and we are resetting “normal” rotations, assessment and placements to ensure that individuals are not disadvantaged.

We have also invested in training our existing workforce to deal with the particular needs of the pandemic such as the targeted training in critical care and respiratory skills, rehabilitation, infection prevention and control, and with learning to support end of life care and how to support individuals living with dementia which have been refocused and rolled out on a multi professional basis. We have learned a lot from the adjustments made to address the pandemic, and it has revealed opportunities to do things differently and better in the future.

We must continue our trend of expanding the number of trainees and students entering health and social care professions to meet the needs of employers and ensure that their education and training is fit for purpose.

We must challenge traditional ways of training and education and ensure that we develop a blended approach that gives students and trainees the best possible experience.

We must move forward and improve on this, challenging approach and lengths of courses, building a flexible and sustainable workforce with key skills in a range of professional roles rather than single specialties, points of registration, expanding apprenticeship type models at all levels, increase multi-professional and multi-agency experiences for placement and working and not return to the old ways of doing things.

We need to continue to invest in our current workforce, nurturing the generalist skills and competences needed to maximise our resilience and ability to respond.

By March 2021 HEIW will

- Increase students and trainees across health professional groups for entry in 2020 programmes as outlined in the Education Commissioning and Training Plan for 20/21.
- Increase investment and support for advanced practice learning programmes and qualifications.
- Restore and reinforce the educational and supervisory roles of staff to ensure that trainees and students in Wales have the best training experience
- Make improvements in key aspects of education including the quality and diversity of student clinical placement opportunities; simulation based training and standards for work based learning.
- Complete the re-procurement stage of the HEIW Strategic Review of Health Professional Education to transform future education programmes
- Collaborate with UK partners to progress transformation of medical education and training to support the Future Doctor report
- Review alignment of NHS recruitment and student graduation cohorts

By March 2021 Social Care Wales will

- SCW will support learning providers to ensure sufficient student numbers are recruited to meet the qualification standards of all social work registered persons, including their re-registration CPD requirements.
- Undertake a review of funding streams that support workforce development including SCWWDP grant and bursaries
- Monitor the take up and delivery of the new Level 2 & 3 qualifications and support implementation of Levels 4 and 5 qualifications.
- Support the implementation and take up of the revised Level 4 and 5 apprenticeship frameworks
- Work with academics and Awarding Organisation consortium to review and support the development of assessment methods.

By March 2021 together we will

- Continue to develop and deliver targeted multi professional training programmes to upskill staff and to maximise winter resilience.
- Share good practice on student placements, work based learning and practice facilitators

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Leadership and
Succession

LEADERSHIP AND SUCCESSION

Leadership and Succession

Our experience in Covid has seen many individuals take on new and/or different leadership roles. We have also seen the impact on our workforce in reacting to change. In both cases we need to ensure that our workforce is supported in this area, as we develop our 'new normal.' We will work with partners to influence cultural change within the health and care services through building compassionate and collective leadership capacity at all levels. This will deliver a more collective and compassionate culture, with significant benefits for staff wellbeing and thus patient and citizen outcomes.

We are building on this approach and rapidly introducing a range of resources, working closely with Professor Michael West. A Leadership Framework for Action has been developed for Health and Compassionate Leadership Principles for Health and Social Care in Wales are in final draft.

We cannot deliver the workforce strategy aims and actions without compassionate leaders. We have continued to support our leaders throughout the Covid 19 pandemic through the provision of a range of credible digital resources in health and continuation of leadership programmes in care all of which are building our leadership capacity for the future at all levels. We must take this opportunity to provide accessible multidisciplinary and multi-agency leadership and management development programmes, executive level leadership development and implement inclusive succession strategies that develop inclusive, collective, system leaders. Using blended approaches we will create vibrant communities of practice that will continue to grow compassionate leadership capacity across the system, creating a culture that promotes healthy working environments, as the wellbeing of our staff is critical to the provision of high quality care and outcomes.

The Covid-19 experience saw leaders at all levels, stepping up to respond to the crisis. We must take this opportunity to capitalise on this, and to support our leaders across statutory, voluntary and private settings and with independent and non-executive board members with an active offer of leadership development.

By March 2021 HEIW will

- Launch our bi-lingual “*Gwella*” digital leadership resource platform to provide increased and flexible access to evidence based compassionate leadership resources across health and social care in Wales.
- Actively engage with staff from BAME groups to understand the issues that may be preventing career development, taking positive action and providing targeted leadership development.
- Develop masterclasses focussed on racial injustice and health inequalities to support leaders
- Develop inclusive national leadership development programmes aimed at increasing clinical and non-clinical leadership capacity and sustainability.
- Establish vibrant leadership networks and alumni to continue to grow compassionate leadership capacity across the system
- Launch the NHS Wales talent and succession planning strategy and deliver the initial phase aimed at tiers 1-3 (Assistant Directors through to Executive Directors), to create compassionate leadership capacity and sustainability across NHS Wales.

By March 2021 Social Care Wales will

- SCW will continue to invest in specific leadership programmes for social care professional heads of service and statutory directors.
- Develop and support peer networks across registered managers in social care in private, voluntary and public services to enhance wellbeing and help protect resilience
- Develop a single point of access webpage hosting resources to support collective and compassionate leadership across the sector
- Continue to collate and link wellbeing resources specific to supporting the wellbeing and resilience of social care leaders
- Develop webinars and masterclasses in collective and compassionate leadership to support practice in the sector
- Explore the scope of opportunities to align approaches to collective and compassionate leadership with fitness to practice, qualifications, community resilience and outcomes focussed practice to develop leadership in social care

By March 2021 together we will

- Develop, consult and publish agreed principles of compassionate and collective leadership to underpin developments in each sector
- Support the promotion and implementation of the new Level 4 and Level 5 qualifications including the related apprenticeship pathways

WORKFORCE SUPPLY AND SHAPE

We have referred to shortages in the workforce throughout this plan, and these were a key driver for the development of the workforce strategy in 2019. COVID-19 has highlighted where these shortages exist with additional risks now being encountered due to the post COVID demands on essential services and winter pressures which will continue to challenge our supply. Staff wellbeing and levels of burnout need to be taken into account as well as new demands for additional workforce, for example in relation to Test Trace Protect and vaccination programmes. To respond to this in months rather than years requires us to be prepared to take an extra ordinary approach to the supply, shape and skill mix of our workforce.

The COVID-19 experience brought into sharp focus that our current data systems and processes do not support workforce modelling in real time to enable rapid decision making about supply and demand. This is a complex situation, and one which we are placing urgency on resolving.

We need to ensure that as far as possible our services have the workforce needed to sustain care during the winter, whilst recognising that they are facing additional challenges. In the NHS, mental health services are already predicting peaks in demand of as much as 20%, and we need to address a significant backlog in diagnostic services to get cancer pathways running effectively. There is reported pressure on a number of parts of the system including: care homes especially in terms of the impact of Covid19 and the need to alter operating practices such as the use of agency staff, reported shortages of qualified nurses alongside issues in relation to testing; fragility of domiciliary care services and potential spike in demand when services are reinstated after the current wave of Covid19 and pressures and demand for supporting vulnerable children.

We need to be prepared to adjust our norms about staffing in advance of any peak or pressures to ensure that this can be done safely and effectively – whether this relates to field hospitals, critical care or rehabilitation. If we don't have enough skilled staff available to us, we need to maximise their effectiveness by ensuring they are doing work that only they can do and deploying them with maximum effect

This also means developing and nurturing a flexible and generic health and care workforce that with targeted training can be prepared easily and quickly to expand our workforce or allow other staff to be redeployed to other areas across the system.

We need to find quick and flexible ways of growing our workforce to meet new initiatives. It will be imperative to be clear about the roles and competencies required to minimise demand on professionally registered staff and create sustainable supply.

In the first peak HEIW developed a generic Patient Care Assistant (PCA) campaign with streamlined ways of attracting, recruiting and training a flexible temporary workforce. This was not required in the first peak but remains an option for winter resilience and could be broadened to a 'health and social care' worker. The PCA work saw the development of new induction programme, aligned to the new induction programme for health and care support workers, which maximises digital technology for delivery and should be further rolled out. This will standardise inductions and rapidly and remotely enable compliance.

All domiciliary care workers are now registered within 6 months of commencing employment and the data indicates that this workforce includes over 20,000 individuals in Wales. They will shortly be joined on the professional registers by care home workers, giving rich insights and intelligence to the workforce, and support to their training, learning and development. We want to ensure there is parity in expectations for the workforce and how we support their training, learning and development regardless of their registration status.

COVID-19 highlighted the need for high quality workforce data in real time, to understand the shape of our workforce and rapidly mobilise and deploy where required. This has presented a significant challenge, and there is much work to do to improve the level of quality and completeness of the data within our existing systems, and in the longer term, improve our data systems.

By March 2021 HEIW will

- Develop standardised, robust competence frameworks and job descriptions for new initiatives and services to support COVID-19.
- Actively support the NHS workforce requirements to deliver essential services in particular mental health, imaging, and cancer.
- Establish a 'reservist registered professional workforce' which can be mobilised rapidly when required.
- Launch the workforce planning digital platform to incorporate learning programmes, networks and virtual classroom capability to support the improvement of workforce planning capability;
- HEIW will work with NWSSP, Health Boards and Trusts to make immediate improvements in the quality and completeness of workforce data at local and national levels.

By March 2021 Social Care Wales will

- Complete an overhaul of our approach to workforce data collection with a new system introduced in April 2021
- Continue to enable the care home workforce to register on a voluntary basis
- Explore the scope for flexibility of learning pathways within the revised post qualifying framework for social workers
- Work with the consortium to explore if top up units can be introduced to accredit individuals learning and enable movement across job roles and/or service settings
- Analysis of the jobs portal to consider workforce supply and demand, and look to capture individuals interest in the sector and initial entry points into the sector
- Complete with NWIS the scoping of a data strategy for social care in Wales

By March 2021 together we will

- Implement our 'pop-up workforce' solution where required for temporary supply issues across health and social care – recruiting, onboarding and training people with experience of working in other sectors in flexible and generic skills to support.

IN CONCLUSION

It goes without saying that to implement this plan will require excellent and committed collaborative working across the health and care sector, between local organisations and national bodies, working in social partnership.

It is also evident of the practical, responsive, initial steps that have been taken across the health and social care sector but it is recognised that there needs to a longer term plan and approach if the ambition the 10 year health and social care strategy are to be realised.