



BWRDD PARTNERIAETH RHANBARTHOL
GOGLEDD CYMRU
NORTH WALES
REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP BOARD



2023-2024

North Wales Workforce Board Annual Report

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Welcome and introduction

Welcome!

I am delighted to introduce the North Wales Workforce Board report for 2022/23. It has been another challenging year in Social Care and Health with workforce challenges at the forefront. However we remain positive and optimistic and have reached some key milestones from within our plan.

We have looked at key areas of focus and continue to align with Social Care Wales on their key priorities. We have delivered on some specific priority areas this year such as Children's Social Work, Occupational Therapy training and recruitment as well as strengthening workforce links to the regional Autism and Dementia work streams.

In June, a stakeholder workshop was held with partners to try to redefine our role and purpose as a Board and we are currently refreshing our North Wales Workforce strategy. We have good engagement with a range of Education and Care providers and welcome improved engagement from Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board (BCUHB), which has been limited.

More recently we held a practitioner workshop on behalf of the Board at the North Wales Social Care Wales Conference. This was deeply inspiring and we heard from a range of qualified Social Workers about their specific stories.

Looking ahead we are now preparing to ensure the experiences of staff are at the heart of our board's activity and our strategy.

Jenny Williams

North Wales Workforce Board Chair

Who are the North Wales Workforce Board?



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The North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB) leads on behalf of the Regional Partnership Board on any strategic matters related to workforce planning, transformation and sustainability. As an integrated Board, the North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB) will take forward joint planning and development of the social care and community health workforce, maintaining strategic oversight on the delivery of the North Wales Regional Workforce Strategy.

The current regional workforce strategy referred to is being reviewed and refreshed. A stakeholder workshop was held in June, where new partners were invited. This was an opportunity to discuss what partners thought the priorities should be for the North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB) moving forward. Work is underway to finalise a North Wales Regional Workforce Strategy within the context of the national strategy developed jointly between Social Care Wales (SCW) and Health Education in Wales (HEIW).

The board will:

We will continue to work together sharing resources in order to ensure they can be best utilised and to provide optimum opportunities for the development and stability of our current and future workforce.

As a partnership we are committed to continue to share the knowledge, skills, expertise and experience of the wide range of people that contribute and invest in our North Wales Social Care and Community Health Workforce.

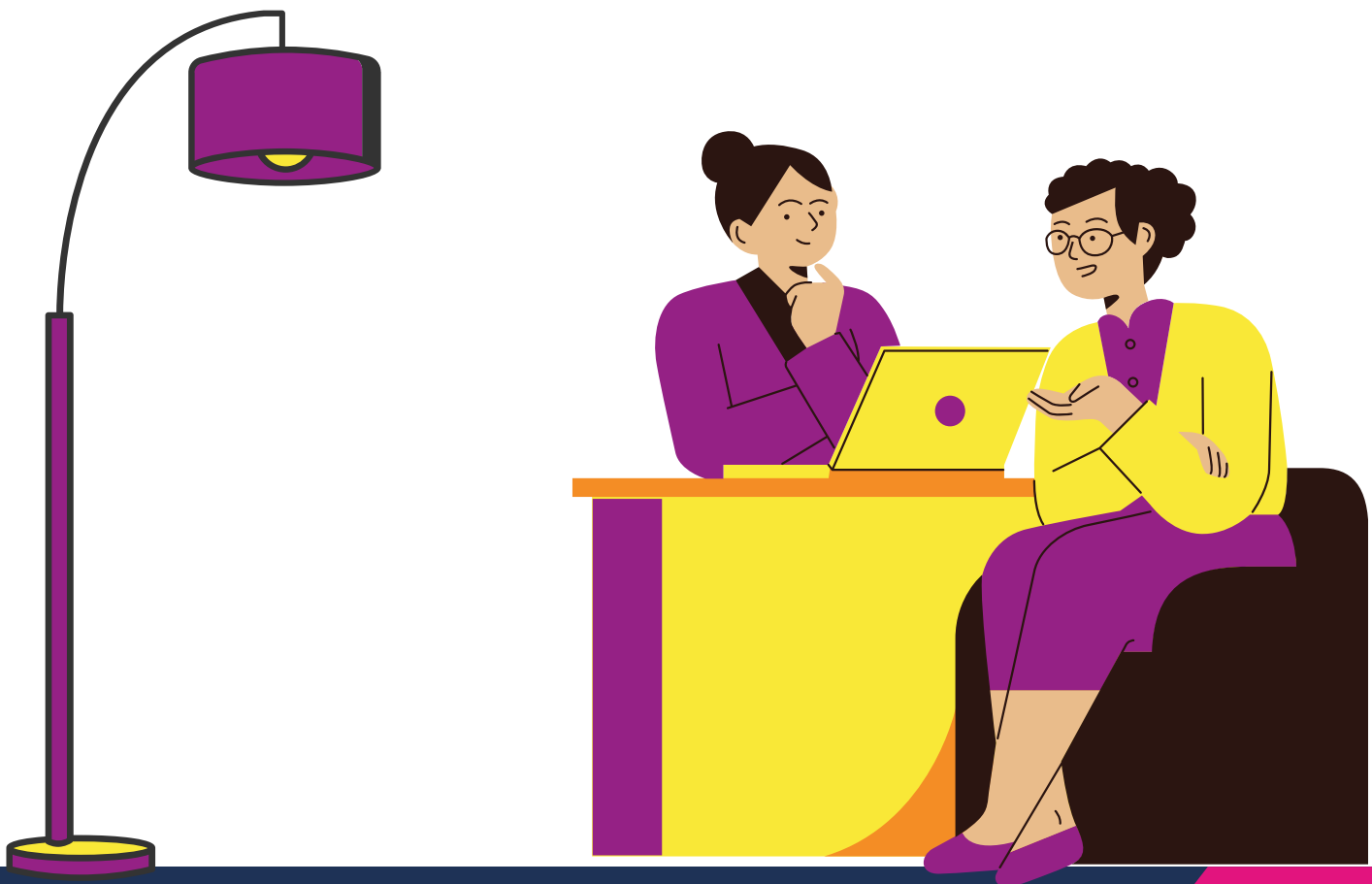
We will continue to embed the Welsh Language through local, regional and national programmes in line with More than Just Words and the Welsh Language Act, ensuring that those in receipt of services are able to do so in the language of their choice.

The North Wales Workforce Board has a shared vision to:

Set out the strategic intentions of the board to work collaboratively and support the guiding principles of the North Wales Regional Partnership Board (NWRPB).

Deliver the priorities set out in the North Wales Social Care and Community Health Workforce Strategy, to have a joined-up approach that supports training and workforce development across the sector and joint approaches that support the retention of the social care and integrated health workforce.

We will bring together resources both funding and people to deliver the priorities set out in the North Wales Workforce Strategy, to ensure that resources are used in the most cost-effective way to meet the needs of a sustainable and qualified workforce.



A year in figures

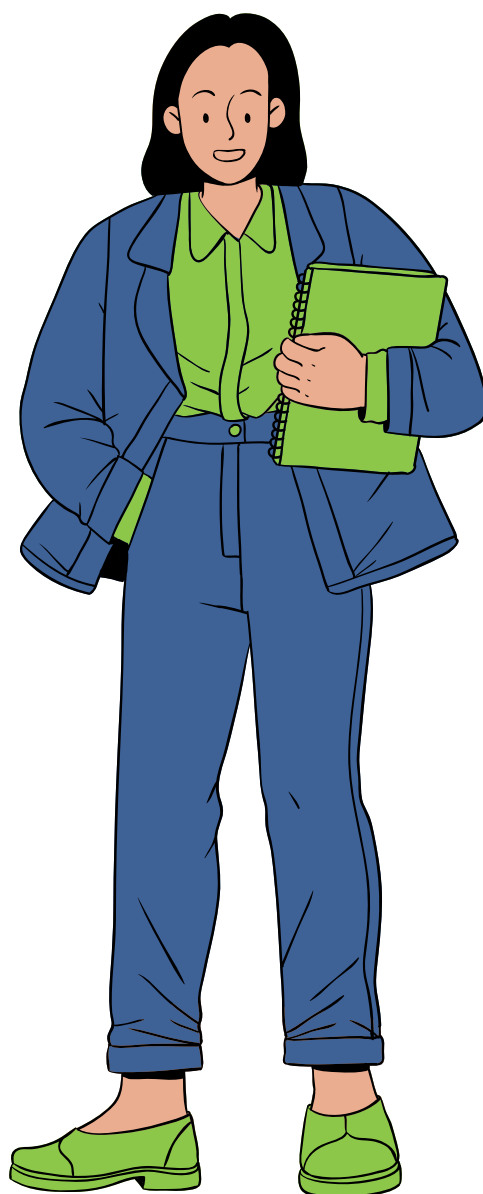
Social Care Workforce

There are an estimated^[1] 17,539 people employed in the social care workforce in North Wales. Broken down for each local authority (LA) region in North Wales the social care workforce is estimated to be:

	Numbers
Anglesey	1,757
Gwynedd	4,337
Conwy	3,759
Denbighshire	2,992
Flintshire	2,679
Wrexham	2,015
North Wales	17,539

Source: Social Care Workforce Report 2022, Social Care Wales

[1] A supervised machine-learning approach (XGBoost) was used to predict the missing number of people in post. See appendix B of the main [Social Care Workforce Report 2022](#) for further details.

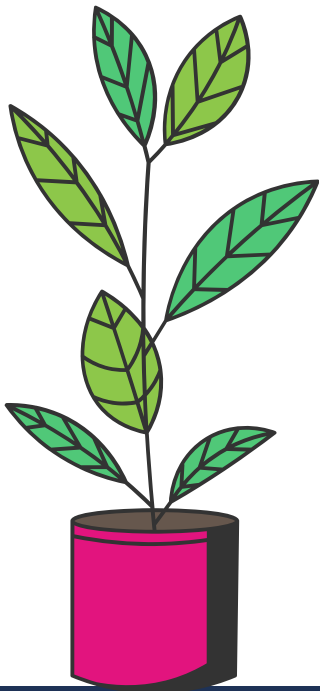


Local authorities and commissioned providers

Of these, 6,543 (37%) work in local authorities and 10,996 (63%) in commissioned providers. The Local Authority region breakdown is given below.

	Local authorities	Commissioned providers
Anglesey	746	1,011
Gwynedd	1,974	2,363
Conwy	1,112	2,647
Denbighshire	706	2,286
Flintshire	1,080	1,599
Wrexham	925	1,090

Source: Social Care Workforce Report 2022, Social Care Wales



Gender

82 percent are female and 18 percent are male.
The local authority region breakdown is given below.

	Female	Male
Anglesey	84%	16%
Gwynedd	84%	16%
Conwy	81%	19%
Denbighshire	74%	26%
Flintshire	85%	15%
Wrexham	80%	20%

Source: Social Care Workforce Report 2022, Social Care Wales



Age

Age groups remain evenly spread across the sector overall. Local authorities have an older workforce, with 53% being 46 or older. Meanwhile, 57% of the commissioned providers' workforce is 45 or younger.

The Local Authority region breakdown is given below.

	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	Over 65
Anglesey	10.5%	20.5%	22.4%	22.4%	21.5%	2.8%
Gwynedd	10.7%	20.4%	21.3%	24.5%	19.8%	3.2%
Conwy	4.8%	19.7%	21.9%	25.3%	25.2%	3.2%
Denbighshire	9.1%	20.6%	21.2%	26.5%	19.8%	2.7%
Flintshire	9.3%	19.9%	22.0%	26.9%	19.9%	2.0%
Wrexham	5.0%	29.1%	25.8%	23.6%	15.2%	1.3%

Note: The proportion of workers by age group for Wrexham was calculated from a relatively low sample size and is indicative only.

Source: Social Care Workforce Report 2022, Social Care Wales



Ethnicity

95% (94.7%) of the social care workforce was recorded as white, which is in line with the general population of Wales. Black people make up 2.7% of the social care work force in Wales. This compares to 0.5% of the population of Wales who are black. Asian and mixed race were recorded as 2.1% and 0.5% respectively for the North Wales social care workforce. Broken down for each Local Authority region in North Wales the social care workforce is estimated to be:

	White	Mixed	Asian	Black
Anglesey	98.6%	0.2%	0.6%	0.6%
Gwynedd	-	-	-	-
Conwy	97.0%	0.8%	2.2%	0.0%
Denbighshire	94.2%	0.3%	4.3%	1.2%
Flintshire	96.7%	0.5%	2.4%	0.4%
Wrexham	97.5%	0.2%	0.4%	1.9%

Note: Proportions of workers by ethnicity in Wrexham are calculated from a relatively low sample size and is indicative only.

Note: Ethnicity data for Gwynedd not included due to low sample size.

Source: Social Care Workforce Report 2022, Social Care Wales

Contracts

Most of the social care workforce in North Wales are employed on permanent contracts; the proportion is 78% of local authority workers and 87% of commissioned service workers in North Wales. Agency workers accounted for only a small proportion of the workforce with 128 (3%) of agency workers employed in commissioned services and 5 (close to zero per cent) in local authorities.

The Local Authority region breakdown is given below.

	Permanent	Temporary	Zero Hours	Agency
Anglesey	77.2%	4.4%	17.5%	0.8%
Gwynedd	72.2%	4.1%	23.4%	0.3%
Conwy	29.9%	4.0%	15.0%	1.2%
Denbighshire	88.6%	4.4%	3.0%	4.0%
Flintshire	91.4%	4.0%	3.7%	1.0%
Wrexham	84.7%	8.3%	6.4%	0.6%

Source: Social Care Workforce Report 2022, Social Care Wales

Hours per week

Over 50 percent (51.2%) of the North Wales social care workforce works 36 hours or more a week, which is slightly higher than the proportion nationally (48.2%).

	Up to 16	16-35	36+
Anglesey	20.9%	34.1%	45.0%
Gwynedd	27.6%	36.8%	35.6%
Conwy	17.3%	35.1%	47.5%
Denbighshire	7.1%	25.8%	67.1%
Flintshire	6.7%	37.7%	55.6%
Wrexham	5.6%	26.8%	67.6%
North Wales	-	-	51.2%
Wales	-	-	48.2%

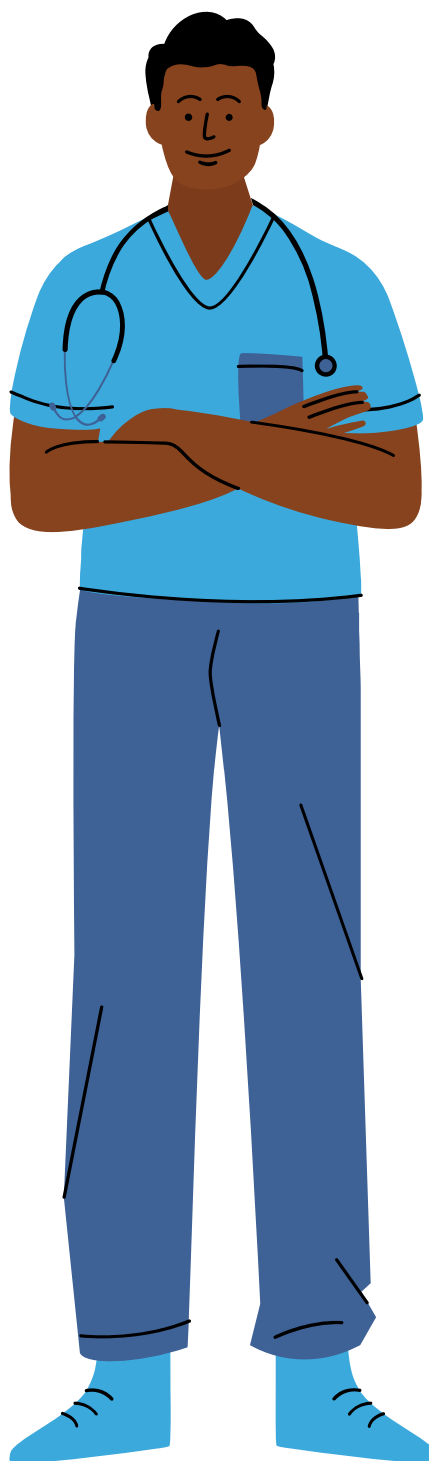
Source: Social Care Workforce Report 2022, Social Care Wales

Vacancies

4 more people left the sector than joined this year in North Wales. 1,087 vacancies were recorded in 2022 which equates to six percent of the North Wales workforce. This value is lower than the national Wales proportion of nine percent of the social care workforce of Wales. The Local Authority region breakdown is given below.

	Vacancies
Anglesey	94
Gwynedd	242
Conwy	266
Denbighshire	218
Flintshire	146
Wrexham	122

Source: Social Care Workforce Report 2022, Social Care Wales



North Wales Workforce Partners



Priorities and strategy

1

An engaged, motivated and healthy workforce

2

Attraction and recruitment

3

Seamless workforce models

4

Building a digitally ready workforce

5

Excellent education and training

6

Leadership and succession

7

Workforce supply and shape



North Wales Strategy 2023 – 2025

The North Wales workforce Strategy will be launched spring 2024 at the North Wales Regional Partnership Board meeting. Working on the above 7 themes, over the next 2 years the North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB) will focus on the following 3 priorities from the North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB) Strategy:

1. Stabilising the Workforce
2. Learning and Development
3. Data and Intelligence Gathering

Following the success of the stakeholder workshop which was held in June 2022 where new members and new ideas were shared around the work of the North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB), a final strategy needs to be signed off. It was clear that the 'A Healthier Wales: Our Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care' should be the basis of the North Wales Workforce Strategy, and that the priorities should be focused to the 7 themes.

North Wales is a large and unique region, and it is vital that the North Wales Workforce Strategy is adapted to the needs of the region, whilst also trying to influence the national workforce work programme. The North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB) has excellent relationships with Social Care Wales (SCW) and Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW). This has been evident in the work that has taken place around the Occupational Therapist degree commissioning. Without these relationships, North Wales would have not been able to change processes and ensure that there are enough degree places being given to social care in particular.



Key Updates and Achievements over the last 12 months

Recruitment and retention including We Care campaign.

The Care Career Coordinator Post is funded from the Regional Facilitation Grant (part of the Social Care Workforce Development Programme funding). The work to date includes active promotion of careers in social care throughout North Wales via:

- Attended events throughout the region in Careers Wales, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Job Centre Plus venues and present information to continually promote careers in social care, early years and childcare, provide 1:1 discussion and provide job seeking skills, CV writing, job application and interview techniques.
- Established connections with North Wales schools and continue engagement with North Wales Further Education Institutes and Higher Education Institutes to actively promote health and social care as a career choice.
- Establishing a regional ambassador programme with fair representation across the region that can be expanded.
- Engage regularly with local authority partners on local needs and how these needs fit or differ from the national agenda.
- Attended job fairs and career events across the region, together with WeCare North Wales members.
- Collaborate with the Taster To Care Programme post holder on promoting the sector.

Taster to care update

- The Foundation Economy Facilitation Grant awarded a 2-year grant in August 2022 to enable the North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB) to recruit an Employment Mentor to provide social care work placement opportunities for a range of people, including those who want to change careers into care and those who want to enter the labour market, or have been away from the labour market for some time.
- The aim of the mentor role is to provide a flexible, high quality service, working in partnership with social care employers [care homes and home care providers] and colleagues from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and Local Authorities across the region, as part of an integrated working project, to act as a facilitator to match candidates with opportunities in the care sector.
- The programme was amended at the beginning of 2023 to take into account the delay in the training provided with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) training, and therefore a more bespoke and targeted training package has been put together which focusses on social care. Work has also been done to ensure that the training that participants complete prior to starting a work placement is mapped to the All Wales Induction Framework and therefore limits the need to duplicate in the future, and also ensuring that they have the best possible opportunity to secure a role following the successful completion of the work placement.
- Although it has taken some time to get the programme started, the number of referrals have increased month on month, with a total of 103 referrals with 13 having completed or on placement as of 31 October 2023.
- Feedback has been excellent from both the participant perspective as well as from the providers.



Feedback from participant:

'I'm super excited to let you know today I completed the taster into care course & I'm feeling extremely proud as it's the first thing I've done for myself in 23 years'.

'Thank you again so much I don't think you realise how much you've helped me want & plan a better future for myself & you have given me the tools to start my new path'.

'It has helped in meeting my objectives, I was able to get first-hand experience on the job also improved in some certain skills like, communication skills, attention to detailed information'.

'I've learned so much from this course, not just at the placement but through doing the modules. It made me actually think about where I wanted to be'.

Feedback from provider:

'A enjoyed it so much she wants to volunteer with us. She's all signed up and has her full-day's induction on Thursday'.

'B was amazing and the staff enjoyed working with him, the residents loved having him'.



Children's Social Worker Task & Finish Group

The group was re-established earlier in 2023 due to Local Authorities continuing to experience challenges around workforce recruitment, with additional elements of recruiting to managerial posts to be addressed as partners start to provide in-house residential care services and build the infrastructure as part of the Welsh Government expectations to eliminate profit from Children's services.

The group propose to focus on the following potential workstreams:

- Memorandum of Collaboration – to gain an understanding of the agency market in North Wales, how this differs across North Wales, how can the region work together towards a consistent collaborative agreement.
- Eliminating profit from Children's Residential Care – how will Local Authorities work together to create structures for having a vibrant workforce to work in residential setting that is realistic without destabilising the market.
- Social Work development - work with relevant colleges on a clear career pathway for students to continue working whilst studying, with clear progression once gained qualifications.
- Way of workings – flexible/hybrid/home working, condensed hours and 4 days over 7 - what works, consider opportunities and challenges/ how could this be managed across the region.

The work to be completed on the above themes proposes to be considered at a regional event in 2024.



Occupational therapist degree numbers

Following a meeting held early in 2023 between Local Authority and Betsi Cadwaladr University Occupational Therapy Leads to discuss workforce forecasting, it became apparent there were issues in terms of the number of students forecasted on to the Occupational Therapist degree. Historically, the Heads of Occupational Therapy Services (HOS) in BCUHB complete a joint annual submission to Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) for required training numbers based on local workforce predictions arising from anticipated staff turnover but in addition and increased workforce needs related to organisational Integrated Medium Term Plans (IMTP's). Despite this submission however, year on year Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) is experiencing a recurring position of workforce demand outstripping supply resulting in significant vacancies.

Through discussions with the North Wales Local Authority (NWL) Regional Workforce Group it has become apparent that the lack of available new graduate Occupational Therapists is not just being experienced by Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) but also the 6 Local Authorities within the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) geographical footprint. As there are community services delivered locally as a pathway between agencies and a workforce which moves regionally between partners, it became clear a workforce gap in one regional partner is a potential risk for others.

Following a Local Authority workforce group meeting jointly with Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and Social Care Wales (SCW) it became apparent that there is no national commissioning for Local Authorities through Social Care Wales (SCW) as either a separate commissioning or submission of numbers for joint commissioning with Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW). In response to this BCUHB submitted a joint regional commissioned number for 24-25 full time and part time intake, an approach commended by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW). The meetings have been beneficial for all partners in jointly identifying the scale of the issue and seeking a regional approach to solutions to resolve for all partners. Concern has been raised to the shortfall in numbers, to the over subscription in the East and under subscription in the West and highlighted the need for a joined-up approach for the Occupational Therapist degree around supporting students on placements and beyond.

Recent discussions have highlighted Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) commission for both health and social care. The next step, Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and Social Care Wales (SCW) agreed to meet to review the current arrangements in place in terms of forecasting and to ensure there is a separate clear process in place for Local Authority commissioning. However, this does not resolve the issues of the current shortfall in places, and this work is ongoing and needs to be resolved with some urgency to enable the delivery of effective health and social care services in North Wales.

Social Care Workforce Development Programme (SCWDP)

Delivery of the Social Care Workforce Development Programme (SCWDP) at a regional and local level:

- Partnership working continues through the virtual Qualifications Group with representatives from each Local Authority and training providers that deliver Health and Social Care Qualifications in North Wales. This group is a subgroup of the Workforce Board.
- Registered Managers forums have continued to be facilitated in a virtual format.
- Work continues to ensure training is available for staff to ensure they meet their Continuous Professional Development (CPD) requirements.
- WeCare campaign to recruit social care workers continues working regionally and supporting national campaigns.
- Continue to work with universities around the social work education agenda both qualifying and post qualifying.
- Work with partners to ensure provision of training for Approved Mental Health Practitioners.

RIF Programme links – including Dementia and Autism

- Closer working relationships with internal Regional Partnership Board, Business Support teams have opened up discussions around different projects. Links are being made into the Dementia Standards Workforce Groups to get an understanding on what is required of the workforce in relation to this standard. Feedback and links can then be made to the Local Authority Training Managers groups. This would also help inform and shape the minimum standards of employment of social care workers. Similarly this is happening in the new Autism Code of Practice.
- Learning Disabilities links are being made and will continue to be made to try and get an understanding whether there is an opportunity for work placements and/or employment for North Wales citizens to enter the labour market.

Work planned for next reporting period

WeCare Campaign

- Collaboration with the nation team to establish a WeCare brand that fits North Wales agenda to direct North Wales public to up-to-date information concerning opportunities across the region, also allowing for quantitative data to be collected to determine the impact of promotional initiatives.
- Create additional digital and physical resources to support schools/ colleges/ university visits and job fairs which increasingly call for interactive activities.
- Further the work on early years; engaging more effectively with early years teams across the region within authorities to establish a network of partners and recruiting case ambassadors within early years and childcare.

Strategic Mental Health Workforce Plan for Health & Social Care

- The Together for Mental Health Delivery Plan sets out the requirement for Welsh Government to work with Health Education Improvement Wales (HEIW), Social Care Wales (SCW) and partners to produce a multi professional strategic workforce plan for mental health.
- Work is now underway to understand and link into the Together for Mental Health Partnership Board and understand how the North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB) can support and work with the Together 4 Mental Health (T4MH) Board to deliver on the actions throughout North Wales.

Data Collection for North Wales

- North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB) want to make use and work with the Regional Innovation and Improvement Hub, who have a wealth of experience and expertise in data gathering. Although data is available through different channels including Social Care Wales (SCW), it would be beneficial for the North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB) to understand the specific workforce data across the region. This will enable the board to understand the trends and identify the gaps to shape the workforce ongoing.
- This collation of data for North Wales will also enable us to plan and identify where improvements need to be made to ensure that the Anti Racist Wales – The Race Equality Action Plan vision: “A Wales that is Anti-racist by 2030”, can be adopted.

Ongoing scoping and partnership working

- With the new strategy and additional members to the North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB) continual scoping and ongoing review of the workstreams needs to be established. As workforce is a key part of every workstream within the health and social care sector it is essential that the North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB) recognise that continual review and collaborative approaches and working is maintained. The Regional Partnership Board workstreams need to work together and ensure that any workforce issues or workforce related projects are discussed. The North Wales Workforce Board (NWWB) need to understand the workforce issues and ensure that North Wales is innovative in its approach to workforce related projects.



Key risks and issues

A strategic risk register for the work programme has been developed and has been presented previously. Additional risks have now been identified some of which have been mentioned previously, but for clarification these are:

- Taster to Care Welsh Government Facilitation Grant Funding ceasing early or not continuing.
- Impact of workforce regulation (registration of domiciliary support & care home workers) on recruitment & retention.
- Children's Services Social Work recruitment & retention.
- Facilities for providers to access appropriate technology to be able to complete on-line training in a confidential setting.
- Registration of residential care work force. This was a requirement of Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 which should be met by April 2022 but has not been subject to emphasis due to the pandemic.

WeCare

- It is challenging to ensure partnerships develop fairly across the region, due to the number of partners; 6 Local Authorities and understanding how each organisation work; a number of different employment agencies i.e. Careers Wales, Job Centre Plus with varied structures from authority to authority making it difficult to co-ordinate the programme and offer regional provision.
- A Social Care Wales review of WeCare is due to be undertaken in 2024, and the challenges and capacity of one post holder across the North Wales footprint will be considered as part of the review.

Risk Register

- The Risk Register will be regularly reviewed and updated by the Workforce Board to capture any further risks to the strategic outcomes within specified projects or as a result of the pandemic.

Highlight

Social Care Wales and The British Association of Social Workers Conference - Celebrating Social Work

The Social Work Task and Finish Group, following an expression of interest, were accepted to facilitate a workshop as part of the Social Care Wales (SCW) 'Celebrating Social Work Conference' in November 2023.

The workshop commenced with an overarching presentation of social work in North Wales and the work being undertaken through the Regional Workforce Board to address the challenges, focussing on the following three key priorities:

- Stabilising the workforce
- Learning and development
- Data and intelligence gathering.



Each of the North Wales local authorities identified a representative from their organisation, and here is their personal story of their journey and development in their role/career in social work, highlighting the different routes into social work.

Denbighshire County Council - Virginia Brownsett, Senior Practitioner Looked After Children (LAC) Service shared her experience of LAC 0-18yrs.

I had always wanted to be a social worker as my parents were foster carers during my childhood. However, I needed life experience before training as a social worker. I loved children, so I trained as a NNEB and became a nanny for 5 years, then a childminder for 5 years and a private day nursery manager for 10 years. For the next few years I was a supply nursery nurse for Conwy and Denbighshire and worked in various schools. I then applied and was successful in becoming a support worker for Denbighshire, which led the way to applying for the social work traineeship, being successful and attending NEWI for 2 years on the Diploma in Social Work (DipSW) qualification. During the holidays I worked alongside the intake team and continued to gain a lot of experience.

Once qualified in 2006 I initially worked in the Corporate Parenting Team. I then spent 6 months covering the court team before returning to the Corporate Parenting Team, which involved younger looked after children and a leaving care service for older looked after children (LAC). I also returned to the intake team a couple of times to cover maternity leave for 6 months at a time and returned to the court team for another spell before returning to LAC which is my passion. Following a restructure and I was moved to the fostering service which I had an interest, given my parents were foster carers and I knew what it was like to grow up in a family that foster I felt I could offer a true view of what it was like. I was then able to return to working between LAC and 14+ team and I have been doing this for some years now.

I love that I can work with the young people over many years and see them mature into adults. I think for them the consistency of a social worker who knows them can have its advantages, however, I do know a few who have not quite liked it because I know them so well I can spot when they maybe aren't being entirely truthful and will probe a bit further.

I have completed my practice teachers award and mentored numerous students who have gone on to do well. We have two working for Denbighshire and one is a service manager in Conwy.

I have also completed the ILM in management and whilst completing this qualification I provide mentoring and supervision to a new starter in the 14+ team.

I was recently successful in my application for the senior practitioners job in the LAC service and I mentor and supervise the two social care practitioners in the service and also a new social worker to the team.

I am very much a team player and I feel I'm supportive of all the team members and I'm always very willing to help and guide them when needed.

What keeps me motivated is seeing the young people achieve their goals and aspirations. The other day I was at a foster placement and a young woman was there, she is now 23 years of age and a Teaching Assistant in a Rhyl school. She said, "do you remember bringing me here just before my 14th birthday", I said "I certainly do". She said she remembered me saying "you'll be fine here and well looked after, these are great carers who I've worked with over all the years I've been a social worker" she said, "well you certainly didn't lie and I'm so grateful to you." It was a lovely heart-warming moment and definitely makes this a fabulous job to do. Yes, there are tricky moments but the good times outweigh the not so good times.



Wrexham County Borough Council - Sarah Gray, Interim Team Manager, Assessment and Intervention Team shared her experience of the support and wellbeing received from the local authority.

I have worked as a Family Support Worker within Family Centres over a long period. I was fortunate to be seconded to Wrexham Flying Start team as Portage worker. The changing point in my career was when I was employed as FSW within a Social Work team, this prompted me to make the decision to seek my Social Work qualification via the 'grow your own route.'

As I had not completed any qualification within several years I was requested to update in line with time lines. I completed the social care access qualification.

Completed my Open University Social Worker degree via the Local Authority. Once qualified I worked within the children's assessment team and progressed through Wrexham via several Social Worker roles.

- Education Social Worker.
- Flying Start Social Worker. This was a privileged role as I gained as wealth of training to support my roles.
- Pre-birth Assistant Team manager.
- Southwark Assistant Team Manager.
- Assessment and Intervention Assistant Team Manager.
- Assessment and Intervention Team Manager.

Throughout my journey I have completed my Continuing Professional Education and Learning (CPEL) and Practice Assessors Award. I am currently completing my Leadership Award.

I have worked in Wrexham through my professional career and am a loyal employee of many years' service. Each day is a challenge. There are daily complicated decisions to be made with the best interest of our children and young people at the heart of the decision making process. The child's voice is important to me, the role of the Social Worker has changed over time. I am excited to be part of this progress thus keeping me motivated and continue with children and young people focussed practice. Social Workers are supporting children and young people to use their voice and make informed choices about their own future. I am privileged to be part of this process. My wealth of training from Wrexham has also kept me motivated putting this new found knowledge and skills into practice and now as a manager sharing my journey with the team.

Isle of Anglesey County Council - Catrin Owen, Social Care Practitioner, Early Intervention and Prevention Team will share her experience of Trauma Informed practice within social work.

Working to the trauma informed framework here in Wales, Isle of Anglesey have set out a goal to become a trauma information island in order to be able to support children and young people the best way possible.

The model in children and families service on Anglesey is grounded within trauma informed practice ensuring our communication with children, young people and families are collaborative.

I hope to briefly cover the statistics around trauma and the impact on children, young people and families, this will provide an insight into the complexities that can occur during social work practice.

In 2019 I was provided with an opportunity within the local authority to take part in an 8 week summer scheme. During this time I was placed within social services' back team which focused on data/information inputting. However, following conversations with my manager I discussed my interest about possibly becoming a social worker one day. Arrangements were then made for me to spend time observing social workers in the office and going out into the community, providing me with an insight into the role helped me confirm that I wanted to become a social worker.

Following gaining my degree in 2020 I was appointed a role as an intervention worker within the prevention and early intervention service (Children and Families). This provided me with a wealth of knowledge, gaining direct experience of working with children, young people and their families. I was able to work with risk, enhance my communication skills and work alongside a number of professionals which included social workers. After a year in post it was a natural progression to develop myself to qualify as a social worker.

In 2021 I was lucky to be chosen as a Trainee Social Worker for Isle of Anglesey County Council. This allowed me to complete my MA in Social Work through Bangor University, following 2 years of university and placements. I have now completed the course in June 2023 and I am currently awaiting my registration. I am now working in the duty and assessment team in children and families service.

During my time of being a trainee social worker, I was placed in three different teams in order to gain a variety of experience. My first placement was in Older Adults team within a third sector agency, a voluntary service which had no statutory duties. During this placement I was able to support with housing needs, signposting for financial support and being an advocate for individuals if required. I gained confidence in my communication skills and collaboration work during this placement. During my second placement within the Adult Learning Disability Team I gained experience of the statutory assessment process, assisting in capacity assessments, supporting with reviewing care packages and joint working with health.

My final placement was in the Duty and Assessment Team in Children and Families Service. This placement provided me with a range of different work and challenges, and during this time I became familiar with the child protection process, managing risk and responding to crisis.

Being a social worker can be challenging and daily we are faced with difficult situations. However, working directly with children and families keeps me motivated, and seeing the changes makes me recognise the difference our roles can make to people's lives. Seeing strengths in families also motivates me within the role, as often during our involvement individuals can feel they have reached crisis point and therefore recognising there are still strengths within the individual and/or family can be a positive step forward to developing a working relationship with them.

In social work for myself, the team around me keeps me motivated, as they can provide advice, assistance and reassurance when times become difficult but also when positive work has been completed.



Co-ordinator shared her journey of a career in the field of Children and Families

Initially started working as a support worker for the Children with Disabilities Team in 1998 as a support worker. Following a period travelling, I returned in 2000 and secured a 6 month post as a social care worker for Meirionnydd Children and Families Team before I went to Cardiff to study. This opportunity made me aware of what social work entailed. Initially I started studying a Drama Teaching degree, but soon realised it was not for me as I had already had a taste of direct work with children and families and had enjoyed the varied and fast paced nature of the work.

Over 3 years of studying Sociology degree I worked for an agency as a part time social care worker for the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff Intake and Assessment Team. I also worked shifts at various Residential Children's homes in Cardiff.

Following that I studied Dip SW at Cardiff University. I had a fantastic placement at Inroad's Street Drug Project which gave me valuable insight into homelessness, substance misuse and complexities associated with harm reduction and supporting people.

My second and fantastic placement was at CAMHS Bridgend. An opportunity to gain experience of multiagency working and direct work with children and families impacted by mental health difficulties. Gained insight into NHS model of training and continuous professional development.

Upon qualifying I worked as a newly qualified social worker at Cardiff Intake and Assessment- very bust, fast paced role and gained a wealth of skills and experience.

I had another period of travelling before returning to Gwynedd, working as a social worker for Meirionnydd Team before a long period as a social worker for the Reception Team.

I then worked for 2 years as a senior practitioner for Dwyfor Children and Families Team and then for 2 ½ years as a Team Manager for Arfon Children and Families Team.

I then worked as a hybrid/dual role Independent Reviewing Officer/ Independent Child Protection chairperson before acquiring my role as Child Protection Coordinator.

I still hold Looked After Children cases. I have a practice teaching qualification and have taken students for the last 10 years. I work as a locum social worker for out of hours service.

I do and I have always enjoyed my job. I enjoy interacting with people, especially children. I strongly feel that with support people can overcome adversity. I enjoy the complexities of humanity and different societies. I enjoy hearing different stories. I particularly enjoy a happy ending, but it's not always the case in the field of social work with children and families.

My personality does not allow me to stay still too long so I always seek out new experiences. I like to learn about new research, and I like to challenge myself.



Gwynedd Council – Marc Bentham, Adult Learning Disability shared his experience as a newly qualified employee sponsored through the degree

I worked as a support worker in various learning disability settings such as day centres, community and supported housing. I also have experience supporting children and their families. I moved on to work as a well-being officer focusing on community work and short-term intervention with the learning disability sector. Whilst doing this role I received a traineeship to complete a social work degree with the Open University. I completed placements within Gwynedd's Fostering Team as well as Adult Mental Health. Since graduating in 2022 I have been working with the Learning Disability team as a Social Worker.

What I enjoy about the role:

- Helping people in need.
- Challenging stigma and helping individuals fight for equality.
- Promoting the ability of people with Learning Disabilities, particularly in the work place to help them find paid work.
- Professional development. Reflecting on my practice and gaining knowledge.
- Supporting people to become more independent and self-sufficient, and seeing them achieve this.



Conwy County Borough Council – Jessica Powell, Personal Advisor, Leaving Care Team will share her experience of a newly qualified employee that has been sponsored through the degree

My journey into social work and how my ability to speak and use the Welsh Language has improved throughout my learning. I have worked as a personal advisor in the leaving care team for 5 years in Conwy. I have worked with vulnerable young people for many years in my role as a PA and previous. I enjoyed the challenges working with young people brought and enjoyed a multiagency approach to working and care planning for individuals as well as remaining person centred.

Completing the K101 and KZW113 courses through the Open University. Applied to the traineeship through Conwy and was successful. Discussed with learning co-ordinator and team manager which route to take into social work (Open University/ Bangor MA). I was a nervous Welsh language speaker, as I had not used the language for some time. I completed a list of pros/cons and discussed what matters to me and what route I would like to take if you take the pressure of being fluent Welsh away.

I met with Bangor University for a conversation to establish my Welsh language skills and ability to complete the course. Met with Bangor University Social Work staff and other students. Agreed to complete the course and challenge myself! I am now in my second year and my confidence to speak Welsh is continuously developing. I feel supported to learn in a safe learning environment by the university and staff in Conwy.

I feel honoured and privileged whilst working with people who share their life story with me and ask for support. That is my main motivation of being able to work with people to empower them to make a difference and choice in their life. I feel proud to be representing Conwy

The ending...

The end of the workshop provided a short interactive element where attendees were asked to share comments on the three questions below:

- What are the challenges in social work?
- What do people see as the solutions?
- What keeps us motivated / what are our passions?

All comments and feedback generated on the 'post it notes' by attendees will be used to inform the next steps with the group and developing options for the Regional Workforce Board.

Contact the team



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