Improving Health and Social Care (Covid 19 Looking Forward)

Social Care Recovery Framework
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Foreword from Julie Morgan MS, Deputy Minister for Social Services

A pandemic on the scale of Covid-19 has not been seen in the world for over a hundred years. The impact has been devastating. Our way of life, our working practices, our behaviours and even our language are all now very different. Every country across the world has been affected. As of July 2021, globally over 180 million people have been diagnosed with Covid 19 and nearly 4 million people have tragically lost their lives\(^1\). The scale of the pandemic is unprecedented and the impact remains relentless. New variants of the virus continue to emerge and, despite the roll-out of the vaccines, in some areas of the world cases continue to increase at an inexorable pace. There is no doubt that the long term impact of this pandemic will be unparalleled and it will take the world years to recover.

In Wales, the impact of the pandemic has been severe with a total of 218,726\(^2\) confirmed Covid 19 cases and, tragically 7,866\(^3\) deaths from Covid 19. The Health and Social Care sector in Wales has been particularly severely impacted by the pandemic, with workers having sadly lost their lives to Covid and some groups of people in receipt of care and support more likely to die than the general population. Intensive care capacity has been trebled yet units have still been at full capacity, services have been paused and scaled back, seeking to prioritise the care and support of those most in need, visits to care home residents have at times had to be suspended, social care provision such as day care and respite care has been paused, and a prodigious community response and huge efforts at mutual aid between local authorities, LHBs and providers have been critical in keeping provision available to those most in need. In addition to this, the demands on the Health and Social Care workforce have been relentless and exhausting. The pandemic has also changed the behaviour of the general public in how they access health and social care provision, particularly in the increased use of digital technology.

The personal impact of the pandemic must not be underestimated. This pandemic has affected us all, but particularly children and young people, disabled people, unpaid carers and older people, to name but a few. As a result it is critically important that the key focus of our recovery planning is on well-being\(^4\) and ensuring that all people in Wales, whatever their experiences of Covid 19, are supported to start to move from a position of response into recovery.

**Improving Health and Social Care (Covid 19 Looking Forward)\(^5\)** was published on 22 March 2021 and set out the initial priorities for recovery that emerged for the Health and Social Care sector over the last 18 months, with the intent of informing more detailed subsequent planning. Similarly, our Programme for Government sets out both our priorities for this

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\(^1\) Johns Hopkins University Global Coronavirus Resources: [COVID-19 Map - Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center (jhu.edu)]

\(^2\) PHW 30/06/21: [Rapid COVID-19 virology - Public | Tableau Public](phw.cymru)

\(^3\) ONS 18/06/21: [Deaths registered weekly in England and Wales, provisional - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)]

\(^4\) Well-being Statement for people who need care and support and carers who need support

\(^5\) Improving health and social care (COVID-19 looking forward) | GOV.WALES
Senedd, and also the ten well-being objectives which we will use to maximise the government’s contribution to achieving each of the well-being goals. This Social Care Recovery Framework has been developed as part of this wider approach and focuses specifically on the immediate and short to medium term priorities which will underpin the recovery and future development of social care in Wales.

As the vaccine and testing programmes continue to be delivered across Wales at pace, I consider that now is the right time to commence planning for the recovery of the social care sector and set out explicitly what the priorities for recovery in the social care sector need to be. There is a lot to consider and a lot to balance. The rapid spread of Covid 19 and the risks of further variants remain. At the same time there are population harms to consider and the need not to destabilise the system as it continues to manage the Covid response and building pressures on services whilst planning for recovery. We will need to continue to carefully consider the data, research and scientific evidence; the evidence from our impact assessments; and the views and expectations of the public, people who are in need of care and support and unpaid carers, as we move towards recovery. It is important, however, that we start to take some steps forward, to explore what recovery for social care in Wales looks like – understanding that it cannot simply be a reversion to the status quo but must be a stepping-stone to the future sector as mapped out in the Programme for Government - and to focus on the urgent priorities that we know need to be addressed.

This framework will complement the wider health recovery planning and Welsh Government’s overarching approach to recovery, and underpins the expectation that where possible health and social care services should work in partnership around areas of mutual importance for recovery.
Purpose of the framework

This framework provides an overarching structure to support the social care sector to plan for recovery. Individual partners should develop their own recovery planning and approaches (either standalone or integrated into their mainstream planning) and ensure that they are informed by this framework. The framework builds on lessons learned to set out the major structural considerations (scope, timeframe and review points, definition of recovery, recovery roles), issues (context and rebalancing care and support; opportunities, challenges and risks) and themes (intended outcomes, overarching considerations, principles and priorities) that will need to be considered in planning effectively for recovery and sets out, at a national level, the recovery actions that are a priority for social care in Wales.

Intended outcomes

It is intended that this recovery framework will enable the social care sector to plan effectively for recovery based on our experiences of Covid 19 and work towards our achievement of the following outcomes:

- People who need care and support (including children and young people), their families, and carers who need support, recover from the impact of Covid 19, have voice and control in how recovery is managed, experience that their rights are upheld, and are able to achieve the well-being outcomes that matter most to them.

- The social care sector recovers from the impact of Covid 19, has a renewed focus on equality and well-being, is more resilient with strengthened partnerships, and is prepared for future outbreaks of infectious diseases.

- The social care workforce, including third sector partners, recovers from the impact of Covid 19, has increased profile, is sustainable, has capacity, is appropriately skilled and rewarded and has access to ongoing development and well-being support.

- Social care providers and employers recover from the impact of Covid 19 with renewed resilience, greater stability and increased use of innovation, alongside a stronger focus on rights and well-being, recognising the impact that the Covid 19 pandemic has had on people who need care and support and carers who need support and the additional demands that will need to be met as a direct result.

Scope

This framework focuses on the recovery of the social care sector in Wales and sets out the recovery priorities that need to be in place to support:
- People (including children and young people) who need care and support, or who are at risk of needing care and support, and their families
- Unpaid carers who need support
- The social care workforce
- Service providers (including regulated care providers), employers, and commissioners

Timeframe

The recovery framework sets out the immediate priorities (to September 2021) that need to be delivered urgently and the short to medium term priorities (September 2021 – March 2022) which are less urgent but need to be prioritised for completion within the next 12 months. The longer term priorities for social care in Wales are set out in the Welsh
Government’s Programme for Government\textsuperscript{6}. Under this, plans for structural change will be informed by the responses to the Rebalancing Care and Support White Paper consultation\textsuperscript{7}. As discussed below, it will be critically important to ensure that the activities that are set out in this recovery framework lay the right foundations to enable the sector to rebalance care and support and to flourish.

It is also critical that this social care framework is capable of alignment with recovery planning in health, education and housing, to support identification of interdependencies and areas where recovery planning should be undertaken jointly.

Review points

Progress with recovery planning will be reviewed and reported on twice within the 2021-22 financial year. The first review point will take place in September 2021 following implementation of the immediate priorities and the second review will take place in March 2022 following implementation of the short-medium term priorities. As well as monitoring progress, these review points will also ensure that the context within which the recovery planning is being delivered is kept fully up to date and that developments in Welsh Government, across the sector, and in companion sectors where relevant, are captured and inform further planning. The Welsh Government will work with social care partners to consider appropriate measures to inform this process.

The Context for recovery

The overarching context for social care recovery planning is set out in the Programme for Government. Within this, social care recovery planning needs to align with the existing legislative structures set out by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (‘the 2014 Act’) and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016, as well as with the priorities set for Health and Social Care in \textit{A Healthier Wales: long term plan for health and social care}\textsuperscript{8} and \textit{A Healthier Wales Action Review}\textsuperscript{9}. Additional relevant context is provided by the Welsh Government Winter Protection Plan for health and social care\textsuperscript{10}. Finally, the Framework also needs to align with the \textbf{five harms} that have been developed to set out the context within which services and care must be provided:

- direct harm to individuals from SARS-CoV2 infection and complications including for those who develop severe disease and in some cases sadly die as a result.

\textsuperscript{6} Programme for Government 2021 to 2026
\textsuperscript{7} Rebalancing care and support
\textsuperscript{8} A Healthier Wales
\textsuperscript{9} Written Statement: A Healthier Wales Action Review
\textsuperscript{10} Winter protection plan for health and social care 2020 to 2021
• the harm caused if services including the NHS became overwhelmed due to any sudden large spike in demand from patients with COVID-19 on hospitals, critical care facilities and other key services\textsuperscript{11}.

• harms from non-COVID illness, for example if individuals do not seek medical attention for their illness early and their condition worsens, or more broadly from the necessary changes in NHS service delivery made during the pandemic in Wales to pause non-essential activity.

• socioeconomic and other societal harms such as the economic impact on certain socioeconomic groups of not being able to work, impacts on businesses of being closed or facing falling customer demand, psychological harms to the public of social distancing and many others.

• the introduction or exacerbation of new or existing inequalities either directly or indirectly from COVID-19.

Combined together as a whole, these complementary areas, as illustrated below, provide the context within which social care recovery needs to be developed.

\textsuperscript{11} Including, of course, harm caused in the event that social care services for children and young people, disabled people, unpaid carers and older people become overwhelmed by demand prompted by Covid
Overarching considerations

For the purposes of social care recovery, the well-being of people who need care and support\(^\text{12}\), unpaid carers who need support and the social care workforce must be at the core of the recovery framework. This is critically important as it ensures alignment between the recovery framework, the core principles of the 2014 Act and the Well-being Statement\(^\text{13}\) which is a key element of the Act. In developing the recovery framework it has been determined that the most critical areas that must be considered in all recovery planning across the sector are:

\(^{12}\) Including children and young people, disabled people and older people

\(^{13}\) Well-being statement for people who need care and support and carers who need support
Well-being (including with reference to the ten well-being objectives in the Programme for Government\textsuperscript{14})

- Reducing inequalities, widening participation and creating an inclusive society
- The principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- The Five Harms
- The Socio-Economic Duty

These overarching considerations are expanded on further in the diagram on P 10. This diagram sets out all of the interdependent elements within the recovery framework and provides the sector with a clear structure to help to inform recovery planning.

\textsuperscript{14} Programme for Government 2021 to 2026
## Recovery Framework for Social Care

### People Who Need Care and Support (including children and young people, disabled people, and older people)

Unpaid Carers Who Need Support (including young carers)

### The Social Care Workforce

**Providers, Employers, Commissioners and Regulated Care Settings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Partnership Boards</th>
<th>Reducing inequalities</th>
<th>Widening participation</th>
<th>Creating an inclusive society</th>
<th>Principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Welsh Government &amp; Care Inspectorate Wales</strong></td>
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<td>Prevention and Early Intervention</td>
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<td><strong>Social Care Wales</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru</strong></td>
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<td>Socio-Economic Duty</td>
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<td><strong>Welsh Local Government Association</strong></td>
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<td>Programme for Government</td>
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<td><strong>Third sector</strong></td>
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<td>A Healthier Wales</td>
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<td><strong>Private sector</strong></td>
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<td>The Quadruple Aim</td>
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<td><strong>Children’s &amp; Older People’s Commissioners</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>The Five Harms</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **The Five Harms**
  - Harm from COVID-19 itself
  - Harm from overwhelmed NHS and social care system
  - Harm from reduction in non COVID-19 activity
  - Harm from wider societal actions/lockdown

- **Well-being**
  - ‘What matters?’
  - Rights and entitlements
  - Personal outcomes
  - Coproduction

- **Multi-agency**

- **Principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014**
  - The Five Ways of Working
  - The Well-being Duty
  - Public Sector Equality Duty

- **Well-being of Future Generations Act**
  - The Well-being Duty

- **United Nations Principles for Older Persons set in Section 7 of the SSWB Act**

- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child set in Section 7 of the Act**

- **Duty to have regard to the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Code of Practice for Part 2 of the SSWB Act**

- **Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Act**

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**Note:**

- The table outlines the framework for recovery, focusing on various sectors and their roles in achieving equality and well-being.

- The Five Harms include:
  - Harm from COVID-19 itself
  - Harm from overwhelmed NHS and social care system
  - Harm from reduction in non COVID-19 activity
  - Harm from wider societal actions/lockdown

- Well-being aspects include:
  - ‘What matters?’
  - Rights and entitlements
  - Personal outcomes

- Principles and acts mentioned ensure a holistic approach to care and support, addressing the needs of the population and the workforce.
Rebalancing care and support

A vital component of the social care recovery planning is to ensure that it sets the right foundations to ensure that, as set out in the Programme for Government, the sector is able to rebalance, to flourish and to meet the care and support needs of local populations. The implementation programme for the white paper will seek to rebalance the care and support market based on a clear national framework where services are organised regionally and delivered locally. The aim is to rebalance social care so that there is neither an overreliance on the private sector, nor a monopoly in the other direction. The white paper defines ‘rebalancing’ broadly as a set of descriptions of the system change we want to see.

Rebalancing means...

...Away from complexity. Towards simplification.
Away from price. Towards quality and social value.
Away from reactive commissioning. Towards managing the market.
Away from task-based practice. Towards an outcome-based practice.
Away from an organisational focus. Towards more effective partnership...
... to co-produce better outcomes with people.

Welsh Government officials are currently working on this area and we will revisit the connection between this work and the Framework in September at our first review point.
Defining recovery

For the purposes of this framework ‘recovery’ is defined in the following four ways:

It is important to recognise that for the social care sector recovery is not about stepping back to what the sector was doing before. Covid has amplified both the strengths and the
weaknesses of the sector. Recovery must be focussed on taking this opportunity and the lessons that have been learned during the pandemic, combined with our sector experiences from before Covid, to develop different and improved approaches to social care and to start to prepare the sector for the future set out for it in the Programme for Government.

Our principles and priorities for recovery

Our overarching principles

Drawing on the prime considerations for all recovery planning, described above, we have developed a set of **overarching principles** for social care:

- **Ensure rights- and strengths-based approaches where solutions are holistic and require a cross-sectoral, integrated systems approach with citizens and unpaid carers and what matters to them at the heart.**

- **Work with partners to share ideas, in order to avoid duplication and enhance efficiency.**

- **Support system leadership and encourage action which builds mature partnerships with mutual benefits for all.**

- **Ensure all people are at the heart of what we do, reaching out further to marginalised groups and develop how anti-discriminatory practice, including equality and race equality standards, are integral to our approach, systems and processes.**

Our recovery priorities

The following areas need to be included in recovery planning to ensure that we are addressing the harms of Covid and preparing for the new, modern and agile social care sector the Programme for Government sets out. These priorities are shared priorities for the whole sector. Referring back to the four types of recovery above, inevitably given the wide-ranging impact of Covid, the great majority fall into the third group “Activity that was in place before Covid and will be adapted/amplified to respond”. There are also some priorities falling within the fourth group (“New activity that was not in place before Covid and needs to continue”), both immediate and of a more ongoing kind, and a smaller set within the second group, reflecting the underpinnings of the system, in “Activity that will recommence in exactly the same way”. What falls into the first group, “Activity that will stop and not recommence”, is principally for partners locally to determine.
Immediate priorities (to September 2021 and ongoing where necessary)

People who need care and support, or who are at risk of needing care and support, and their families and unpaid carers who need support

- As a sector, we will ensure that all recovery planning has well-being and ‘what matters’ at its core, for people who are receiving care and support, unpaid carers who need support and the social care workforce. In particular, we will ensure that it is focussed on reducing inequalities and avoiding disproportionate impacts, especially for people with protected characteristics, and is informed by the actions to be set out in the Race Equality Action Plan and any LGBTQ+ Action Plan, as well as other sources such as those discussing the impact of Covid and related restrictions on disabled people.

- As a sector, we will include considerations of prevention and early intervention in our recovery planning, in the spirit of the Social Services and Well-being Act. Our consideration will span the range of care and support or support recipients including unpaid carers and those with a learning disability and, in partnership with health and third sector partners, take in concepts such as Social Prescribing.

- As a sector, led by Welsh Government, we will continue to work with unpaid carers and the third sector to understand the impact of Covid 19 and deliver actions to address this through implementation of the National Strategy for Unpaid Carers. In particular, the Welsh Government has committed funding of £3million to work in partnership with local government and the third sector to increase the availability and diversity of respite services for unpaid carers.

- As a sector, we will continue to support families to stay together by facilitating opportunities for families to identify and own solutions to challenges brought about or amplified by Covid 19 and continue to work with the Children’s Commissioner to promote children’s rights.

- As a sector, we will continue to ensure the right support is available to maximise people’s ability to remain in or return to their own homes, with commissioners working with the third sector and providers to ensure that people who have been unable to return to their own homes, or other appropriate setting, following hospitalisation or temporary residence in care provision, are able to return home as quickly, sustainably and safely as possible. In doing so we will make appropriate links with the Urgent and Emergency Care pathway spanning pre-admission through to early or more timely discharge.

- Similarly, with input from the third sector, citizens and unpaid carers, we will build on the successful community, volunteer-led approach to responding to Covid and enable support to people who have been restricted in their ability to leave their
homes throughout the pandemic to now look to access their communities with confidence once again.

- As a sector, we will ensure that timely contact between universal and preventative services and people, including children and young people, remains a high priority. It is important risks within the family environment are identified, particularly where new or additional pressures are being felt as a consequence of the pandemic. We want families to receive the support they need at the earliest opportunity, avoiding and de-escalating crises wherever possible. To support this the Welsh Government will actively promote the ‘It’s ok to ask for help’ safeguarding campaign to encourage children, adults at risk and families to reach out for help before issues escalate or when someone is at risk of harm, and ensure that the MEIC and Childline helplines continue to be available to children asking for support, especially where the need for support has been impacted by the pandemic.

- As a sector, we will continue to work with health partners to build on the successful offer of the first dose of the Covid 19 vaccine to all adults aged 18+ ahead of the end of July 2021 deadline, by continuing to promote and maximise take up by individuals who have shown hesitancy.

- The Welsh Government will continue to provide funding to ensure that a wide range of specialist advocacy provision is available to adults, children and unpaid carers, especially in cases where advocacy is needed as direct result of the impact of Covid 19, looking ahead to the implementation of our Programme for Government commitment to prevent families breaking up by funding advocacy services for parents whose children are at risk of coming into care.

Service Providers (including regulated care providers) employers and commissioners (in-house and externally commissioned service provision)

- As a sector, we will continue to ensure that the risk of Covid 19 entering care homes in Wales is minimised through effective infection prevention and control supported by relevant training and guidance and PPE, adherence to the hospital discharge guidance, safe visiting approaches, and using the testing resources available.

- As a sector, we will continue to promote safe visiting into and out of care homes, supported by confidence-building actions and guidance which the Welsh Government will keep under frequent review in order to ensure the advice to providers is consistent with public health advice and wider population restrictions. The Welsh Government will also continue to work with the Older People’s Commissioner and EHRC Cymru to ensure the rights of older people and people with learning disabilities in care homes and housing settings are protected and, with Public Health Wales, take steps to determine what further easements may be considered in care homes, in relation to social distancing, face coverings, testing and isolation periods to support a greater sense of normality in day to day living.
• To support the **resilience of the social care sector**, Welsh Government will continue to support the sustainability of care providers in the context of the resources that are available for example through extension of elements of the Adult Social Care element of the **Local Government Hardship Fund** and comparable funding for NHS-commissioned care and support. As well as maintaining the provision of vital care and support, this recognises the economic value of social care to communities as part of the foundation economy and through giving people the ability to find work within their communities.

• Commissioners of care and support services in local authorities and health boards will continue to have a key role in using this financial support in a way that enables them to ensure that they are able to meet the care and support needs of their local population.

• The Welsh Government will also carry on working with relevant partners to understand the scale of the issues related to **insurance and indemnity** and identify potential solutions.

• Commissioners will need to work in partnership to develop the local service structure to deliver care and support to meet local population needs in line with the development of their Population Needs Assessments and Market Stability reports.

• The local sector will need to be sustainable and able to provide the range of services to meet the changing needs of local populations.

• As a sector, we will focus on placement stability for looked after children; in support of this, the Welsh Government will continue to provide **support to recover and maintain stable placements for children** which have been affected by the pandemic and continue working with the judiciary and local authorities to address **legal processes related to children’s placements** that have been backlogged. At the same time, the Welsh Government is considering developing a **testing protocol for foster carers** so they can continue to safely care for children and facilitate contact with families and friends.

**The social care workforce**

• As a sector, we will prioritise the **well-being of the social care workforce**. Within this, the Welsh Government will work in collaboration with health partners to deliver a workforce well-being assessment tool for the health and social care workforce, and work with Social Care Wales to ensure that the social care workforce has access to an effective and varied workforce well-being offer. We will also continue to work in
partnership with the Third Sector to ensure the well-being of the workforce and volunteers connected to community projects.

- Recognising the importance of domiciliary care provision, the Welsh Government will ensure that the domiciliary care workforce continues to be able to access Covid 19-related support, such as financial support for Covid-related absence through the Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) Enhancement Scheme and the recognition payment scheme.

Short-medium term priorities (through Sept 2021-March 2022)

People (including children and young people) who need care and support, or who are at risk of needing care and support, and their families and unpaid carers who need support

- The Welsh Government will work in close collaboration with Regional Partnership Boards to ensure that their planning is informed by this Recovery Framework and ensure that recovery planning across health and social care is aligned and the key interdependencies are explicit.

- As a sector, we will identify and address the extensive range of ‘hidden harms’ of Covid 19 and, with consideration of ‘Rehabilitation: a framework for continuity and recovery 2020 to 2021’, identify the longer term implications of these harms for people who need care and support, unpaid carers who need support and the social care workforce.

- As a sector, we will include in our recovery planning consideration of the impact of Long Covid\(^{15}\), and the implications that this will have on the provision of and demand for social care provision, particularly for reablement and domiciliary care.

- As a sector, we will support older and disabled people to remain or return to being active members of their local communities, making appropriate links across to relevant health frameworks which seek to enable people’s ability to remain active and independent in their own homes. In particular, for older people we will do this by taking forward actions in the Welsh Government Strategy for an Ageing Society, which the Welsh Government will publish in autumn 2021.

- The Welsh Government will continue to implement and monitor the all age, cross-government strategy on tackling loneliness and isolation — ‘Connected Communities’ and will launch a three year £1.5m Loneliness and Isolation Fund in order to help build strong relationships and connections within communities and share good practice.

\(^{15}\) Noting the Adferiad (Recovery) Long Covid programme
• The Welsh Government will use the findings from Age Cymru’s “Tell Me More” project, due in December 2021 to provide a direct insight into the experiences of people living in care homes during the pandemic and will inform future advice about the management of risks within care homes.

• A review commissioned by Welsh Government of the demand, capacity and design of neurodevelopmental services (including autism) to inform future service improvements will include consideration of the impact of Covid-19.

• As a sector we will support Welsh Government action to deliver Phase 3 of the Covid 19 Vaccination Programme. We will work with health partners to facilitate and promote uptake of booster vaccination by frontline social care workers, care home residents and staff and others prioritised as set out in stage I of the programme announced by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and immunisation.

• Responding to issues raised by Mencap Cymru and other third sector partners, the Welsh Government will work with partners to seek to identify what access people with learning disabilities have to advocacy services (including support for self-advocacy) and respond to gaps.

• As a sector, we will prioritise in recovery planning the response to Improving Care, Improving Lives comprehensive review of specialist learning disability in-patient provision, in particular around improving quality in commissioned services and increasing provision of community-based support, appropriate housing and accommodation.

• Reflecting on the way the pandemic has brought into sharp relief the health inequalities faced by people with a learning disability who have associated increased health risks, the Welsh Government will explore options for providing a Cluster Level Approach to Delivery of Learning Disability Health Checks.

• As a sector, we will give consideration to how to mitigate the impact on children and young people of the indirect harms of the pandemic and explore partnership solutions to find alternative ways to address the demand for secure provision for older children, supporting a move away from such services and into a more preventative approach.

• With partners, the Welsh Government will carefully monitor the impact of Covid on the numbers of children coming into view of social services and the impact on the number of children in care.

• The Welsh Government will continue to prioritise (and monitor) the St David’s Day fund for care leavers experiencing financial hardship due to Covid 19.
• Additionally, the Welsh Government will work with partners to take forward its linked Programme for Government commitments to provide additional specialist support for children with complex needs who may be on the edge of care; explore radical reform of current services for looked after children and care leavers; eliminate private profit from the care of looked after children during the next Senedd term; fund regional residential services for children with complex needs ensuring their needs are met as close to home as possible and in Wales wherever practicable, and strengthen public bodies in their role as ‘corporate parent’.

• As a sector, we will place a focus on improving and enhancing the quality of the conversations between people and practitioners as part of the assessment and review process for care and support.

Service Providers (including regulated care providers) employers and commissioners (in-house and externally commissioned service provision)

• The Welsh Government will maintain in place legislative Covid responses, such as suspension of the choice of accommodation provisions, and the changes made under the Coronavirus Regulations for regulated services\(^\text{16}\) for as long as these continue to be proportionate and appropriate, whilst promptly ending those which are no longer right to maintain.

• Supporting older and disabled people’s independence at home, the Welsh Government will seek to work with the sector to increase the capacity and reach of domiciliary care through a variety of means, including linking this to the Welsh Government’s commitment to the Foundational Economy.

• The Welsh Government will work with our partners, including care providers, to shape a future funding approach which enables commissioners to respond to changing population need by securing the care and support provision we need as a nation for the future.

• The Welsh Government will continue to endorse joint working across health and social care, following the priorities in the health and social care Workforce Strategy and work on workforce issues and models across urgent care, primary care and emergency care. To complement this, as a sector, we will harness the improved collaborative working across health, social care and the third sector that we have seen during the Covid 19 pandemic, such as accelerated development of primary care clusters, to drive improvement. In doing so we will ensure that our systems and ways

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\(^{16}\) The Regulated Services (Service Provider and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020
of working are aligned so that services are supported to recover and provision meets the needs of individuals.

- Similarly, recognising that many new ways of working and innovative practices have been introduced through the pandemic, as a sector we will consider and evaluate these to build on them where appropriate to do so.

The social care workforce

- The Welsh Government, advised and supported by the Social Care Fair Work Forum, and working with us as a sector, will seek to advance parity of esteem between workers in the health and social care sectors, including working towards improvements in terms and conditions and implementing the Real Living Wage for social care workers during this Senedd term, as well as ensuring that there is a continued focus on supporting wellbeing and mental health and pursuing a Fair Work agenda more generally. This, together with a focus on recruitment activity, will support both retention and the expansion of the workforce to address the challenges ahead.

- The Welsh Government will ensure that Regional Safeguarding Boards have training programmes in place to support practitioners to meet the recovery challenge within both adult and children’s services, while also recognising a proportionate ‘positive risk approach’ to recovery.

Opportunities, challenges and risks

Opportunities

The most significant opportunity that the pandemic has provided is that we are able to build positively on the lessons learned and the accelerated change within social care and start to set the foundations for the future shape of social care, based firmly on the principles of strength-based approaches to the provision of care and support, ‘what matters’ conversations, and use of solutions such as Direct Payments and community-led services for flexible support.

The pandemic has encouraged the development of new methods of outreach to client groups. Evidence from some children looked after, for example, indicates that some of these new video-conferencing-based methods are actually more supportive of their participation and engagement than standard methods. Similarly, early efforts to put electronic devices in care homes to facilitate new approaches such as electronic consultations with health professionals could be built upon, as could initiatives such as online sessions to promote the well-being of unpaid carers (the Me Time project) and use of
systems such as Alexa to provide personal entertainment, provided that appropriate consideration is given to issues of digital exclusion and sensory and other disabilities which might preclude these approaches.

In the context of day services and respite provision, the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru is working to capture and disseminate positive examples. As well as encouraging healthy living and exploring preventative and early intervention approaches, there is also an opportunity to assess what balance of residential and domiciliary care is best suited to meet local needs.

The heightened profile of the social care sector provides an opportunity to respond to the need for parity of esteem between those working across health and social care. In relation to pay, terms and conditions, the Welsh Government has committed to securing payment of the Real Living Wage for social care workers. The review of the actions underpinning A Healthier Wales will seek to support still further integration of health and social care, achieving greater parity between health and social care workers will be a fundamental pillar to achieving integration.

Greater investment in digital technology offers opportunities to support provision of both professional and clinical advice and support to people and staff, and can also help to address people’s wellbeing and their need and desire to maintain contact with others.

Dealing with the pandemic has delivered an impetus to collaborative cross-sector working and information-sharing. The pandemic has provided an opportunity for key partners to work in much closer collaboration; an approach which can and should be built-on during recovery.

**Challenges and Risks**

The impact of Covid 19 will continue to emerge throughout the recovery period and beyond. It is anticipated that the demand for social care services may increase, with more unseen and unreported issues that have built up during the pandemic potentially emerging, placing increased demands on an already stretched sector. There is a related risk that illness and self-isolation will deplete care staff numbers at the same time as anxiety and burnout could cause highly skilled and professional workers within social care to move on; thus depleting the workforce just as demand may increase. In the light of these issues, building on pandemic business continuity planning across the sector to ensure that vital services may be maintained will be crucial.

Challenges are already materialising in children’s services, with these seeing a significant increase in pressure and the complexity of cases, a similar pattern being evident in schools. This reflects issues arising from young children having missed exposure to development (for example socialisation) and, in some older children, regression in some areas of development. These indirect harms of the pandemic present a key area for services to mitigate. In this context, balancing the demand for secure provision for older children against the lack of provision and the need to devote investment and partnership working to find alternatives represents another challenge.
Managing new ways of providing care and support in light of digital poverty/exclusion, availability of accessible equipment, computer literacy and internet connectivity will be a challenge. Additionally, while digital solutions have worked well in some areas they are not always sufficient, and face to face visits are still needed. Both young and old alike have been impacted by the reductions in family contact.

In addition to the challenge posed by the comparatively old physical infrastructure of care facilities in Wales and the cumulative effect of remedial and development/improvement work delayed by Covid, the social care sector now has a number of new areas of work that will need to be delivered. These include, testing for Covid 19, an increased demand for ‘flu vaccinations, supporting the delivery of Covid 19 vaccines (including boosters), the supply of high quality Personal Protective Equipment and the requirement to manage and maintain social distancing requirements. Maintaining these will continue to be a challenge.

Finally, an underpinning challenge will be balancing the continued Covid response and work on recovery, recognising in particular the impact of the third wave and the exhaustion of the workforce.

Recovery roles
The role of Welsh Government
The role of the Welsh Government is to set the policy context for social care in Wales, to deliver policy interventions in line with the programme for government and to engage and jointly plan with key stakeholders for recovery. As well as continuing, where appropriate, national level interventions such as the testing and vaccination programmes, the Welsh Government will set and own the framework for recovery planning and, through this Framework, the priorities to guide recovery activity across the sector. It will also lead the process of monitoring and updating these.

The role of Social Care Wales
Social Care Wales fully reviewed business priorities as we entered the pandemic to ensure our work remained focussed on supporting the social care, early years and childcare sector. We remain committed to supporting the sector through recovery and into the future, in particular in relation to this recovery framework we will:

- Work with partners to deliver wellbeing support for the workforce
- Provide resources and leadership to support attraction, recruitment and retention in the sector, working with national and regional partners to maximise our impact
- Enhance the access and use of research and data to inform learning, planning and service improvement and support the implementation of the strategic statement of intent for data
• Take a lead role in the oversight and delivery of the Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy

• Through registration of the workforce with us, we will continue to provide information and intelligence to support recovery planning, and to communicate key messages to the registered workforce when appropriate

• Continue to keep under review our regulatory requirements and approaches to respond to the needs of the sector balanced with the need to protect the public

• Use our role as lead improvement agency for social care to support service transformation and development

Our business plan will describe the full breadth of work we will lead and support and we maintain our commitment to doing so in collaboration with the sector.

The role of Care Inspectorate Wales

Throughout the pandemic Care Inspectorate Wales has sought to support the social care and childcare sector. We will continue to do this during the recovery period by operating in line with the principles that guide how we work.

These are:

• Putting people first: the voice and well-being of people is at the heart of our work underpinned by a rights based approach.

• Being intelligence led: our work will be informed by data and intelligence

• Being risk based and responsive: we will take a planned, risk based, proportionate and timely approach to our work.

• Working collaboratively: we will continue to listen, share information and work collaboratively

• Supporting improvement and innovation: we will use our knowledge and powers to support social care and childcare services to improve and encourage new ways of working

• Reflecting and learning: we will take time to reflect and learn from all aspects of our work, and adjust our approach where necessary.

What each of our guiding principles mean in practice in supporting social care recovery is set out on our website [here](#).

This supplements and aligns with the actions we have set out in ‘[Our approach to assurance](#)’.
We will also continue to work to in line with our strategic priorities as set out in our Strategic Plan which provide us with our organisational direction and focus over the next four years.

- To be a trusted voice to influence and drive improvement
- To consistently deliver a high quality service
- To be highly skilled and responsive

It is important to recognise the importance of the childcare sector in supporting social care recovery. This sector provides care and support for young children from vulnerable families as well as supporting the social care workforce.

The role of Local Authorities

Local authorities play a central role in governing Wales as they provide the local leadership and services necessary for their communities. As well as delivering local services, local authorities are the biggest employer in their area and contribute significantly to the local economy.

Local authorities provide certain statutory services which are set out in legislation and cover services like social care, environmental health inspection and planning. They can provide other services such as leisure and art centres at their discretion. Local authorities provide some services directly, work in partnership with other organisations to provide others and can commission organisations in the private and voluntary sectors to provide services on their behalf.

Local authorities have wider statutory duties, such as those to advance equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination. They are also legally required to make sure that every decision they make takes account of the needs of future generations as well as the existing population. Local authorities work with a range of local and national partners and bodies in delivering local services, providing democratic representation and providing strategic leadership.

As part of social care recovery from the pandemic, Local Authorities have a duty to ensure that there is a balance between the ongoing response to the pandemic and supporting local providers and residents to mitigate the long term impact of the pandemic as much as possible. This includes ensuring that there are adequate social care services to meet the needs of the local community. As commissioners and providers of services we will work with our residents and partners to co-design innovative models of care which promote independence and wellbeing and the best use of resources.
The role of ADSS Cymru
As the sector recovers from the pandemic, the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru will continue to provide strategic leadership across Social Care and represent the voice of the leaders within the profession. This will ensure that responses to recovery are co-ordinated & learning and best practice is shared across our membership and other parts of the wider social care community. Looking to the future, we will proactively work with our communities and partners to ensure that the model of care is innovative, ensures the wellbeing of our workforce, is financially sustainable and most importantly supports the best possible outcomes for the people we support.

The role of the Welsh Local Government Association
Recovery from COVID-19 will inevitably dominate the work of local government and the Welsh Local Government Association for much of 2021-22.

Councils have demonstrated flexibility, innovation, resilience and responsiveness throughout the pandemic and this will need to be maintained as the response continues and as they plan for reconstruction and recovery.

The WLGA has already realigned itself, both its organisational structure and work programme, to support the local government response to the coronavirus pandemic and our approach looking forward will prioritise ‘Supporting councils’ response to COVID 19’. As part of this we will refocus and re-prioritise activity across the WLGA’s core priority themes:

- Local Leadership, Freedom and Flexibility
- Finance
- Schools, Skills and Lifelong Learning
- Health and Social Care
- Housing and Community Safety
- Regeneration and a Resilient Environment

The focus for the WLGA in relation to social care will be how we can support local authorities, working closely with Welsh Government and all partner organisations, to deliver good quality and sustainable social care services for the future where people are supported to live the lives they want to lead.

The WLGA will:
- Be agile in supporting local authorities and in responding to challenges and changing priorities during the rapidly evolving pandemic.
- Reshape its engagement with and priorities for the Welsh Government, UK Government and partners given the national refocus of collective resources on coordinating the response to COVID-19.
- Ensure the political leadership of the WLGA and local government is engaged in and influences the Welsh Government’s and collective public service COVID-19 response and any future recovery and reconstruction planning.
• Refocus and reprioritise organisational resources and priorities to support the aims of the political leadership and the collective needs of local government’s COVID-19 response.

• Seek to ensure local government funding is prioritised by Welsh Government and UK Government, making the case for additional funding to cover additional pressures and responsibilities and any lost income.

• Work with professional groups to engage and inform emerging Welsh Government policy announcements and the development of guidance or regulations as they develop in response to the changing crisis.

• Seek to maintain responsive communications and engagement channels and sharing of information and intelligence within local government and between Welsh Government and national partners and local authorities.

• Champion and promote councils’ community leadership role and responsiveness and encourage and facilitate shared learning, working with partners to ensure innovative practice and lessons are shared to shape councils’ response to the pandemic.

The role of Regional Partnership Boards and other partnerships

Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) played a key role in ensuring there was a joined up health and social care response to the pandemic and actively shaped and refocused patterns of service delivery within communities to help people return home from hospital and stay well at home.

They managed substantial additional investment to help relieve system pressures during the heights of the pandemic with a particular focus on investing in home from hospital services and community based care and support.

RPBs will continue to provide a valuable space for health, social care, housing, education and the third sector to come together with citizen, provider and carer representatives to ensure joined up strategic planning and commissioning of health and care services.

In undertaking their population needs assessments in 2021/22 they will examine the impacts of Covid 19 on both the population and the social care market. They will undertake and publish assessments of the wider health, care and wellbeing needs of the population and the range and level of services available to meet those needs, judging whether or not the patterns of services are sufficient to meet need. This will include an assessment on the range and level of services available through the medium of Welsh.

RPBs will also assess the sufficiency of care and support across their regions, and of the stability of the market for regulated services such as residential care, domiciliary care, fostering and adult placements. These will be published in regional market stability reports by June 2022. In preparing these reports, RPBs will examine factors such as quality, trends, challenges, risks and opportunities, to build up a holistic picture of the sufficiency, stability and sustainability of the social care market over the next five years.
In 2022/23, based on the data and intelligence gathered through their needs and market assessments they will develop their five year strategic plan to support the continued development and growth of integrated and seamless health and care services in the community. RPBs will be encouraged to seek wider opportunities for pooling funds to support integrated commissioning and delivery of services.

During this time RPBs will also continue to work to shape, develop and embed integrated models of service delivery that provide seamless services for people in their local communities. Closer alignment between RPB strategic planning and primary care cluster level delivery will also be promoted.

For the medium to longer term work through the Rebalancing Care and Support white paper will seek to further strengthen regional working arrangements.

It will be important that Regional Partnership Boards, in their mainstream planning activity as well as winter response and other plans, ensure that this planning is informed by this Recovery Framework and that recovery planning across health and social care is aligned and the key interdependencies are explicit. The Welsh Government will work in close collaboration with Boards to this end. RPBs may wish to make links across to any recovery planning being undertaken by Public Service Boards, Regional Safeguarding Boards, Together for Mental Health Partnerships, and partners in housing and education.

The role of the Third Sector

The Third Sector has been at the heart of communities facing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, providing ongoing support and harnessing community resources, such as volunteering, community buildings and advice agencies.

Recovery from COVID-19 will continue to be a significant area of demand on community services and resources, and therefore on the wider Third Sector networks across Wales, at both local and national levels. The sector has continued to demonstrate its ability to be responsive and flexible to citizen needs and concerns, as well as the ability to reach further into some communities that are harder to reach. WCVA has provided a national strategic role in connecting the sector with additional funding and resources provided by Welsh Government, as well as enabling essential conversations on topics such as mental health and well-being, equalities and community-led solutions to form the core backbone of the wider recovery planning and processes.

As a sector, it has come together to support impromptu support networks created by local community volunteer schemes, adjusted how it provides support services by making use of digital platforms, and come together to make the most of shared assets and resources. While the pandemic has caused significant disruption in service delivery, it has also provided an opportunity for some of the more bureaucratic processes of working together to be put aside. In doing this, there has been an increased ability for all partners to both create and implement innovative solutions quickly, enabling the sector to be able to respond flexibly and in a person-centred way to the changing demands of local and national communities.
The sector remains under significant strain in terms of capacity, with demand for services greater than ever as a result of the pause on public sector support, and the increased concerns around wider communities’ health and well-being in managing the impacts of the pandemic. It will be essential that the current conversations between third sector, social care and health partners continue on an equal footing, so we can ensure that all partners can continue to play their part in shaping recovery, and innovations in working are not lost.

In shaping recovery going forward the Third Sector will;

- Continue to engage with all partners in the recovery conversation, bringing ideas and solutions led by citizen voice, to ensure a person-centred and co-produced approach to recovery planning.

- Continue to work to our values as a sector, working flexibly, listening to the communities we represent as agencies and ensuring their voices are at the heart of the recovery process.

- Continue to work with social care, health and wider partners to ensure that communities who have been disproportionately impacted upon, or are harder to reach, are supported to actively engage in the recovery design.

- Continue to raise areas of concern that need to be addressed and track progress against those, such as mental health, equality, community resilience.

- Continue to work with Welsh Government as partners in the recovery process, providing evidence and advice for shaping guidance and plans, including monitoring the impact of the visiting guidance, and plans to start to re-open community-based support services.

- Continue to work with Welsh Government, Regional Partnership Boards and Local Authorities to further develop some of the recent co-designed solutions; including social prescribing for mental health, creative use of direct payments for citizens, creative short break options for carers and supporting community-led social enterprises to grow.

- Continue to be at the heart of recovery within the community and act as the essential conduit for engagement with both citizen and unpaid carer voices to ensure recovery truly is a co-productive process with those who use services.

The role of Registered Providers

Registered providers providing both care homes and domiciliary care are a key underpinning of the fabric of care and support in Wales for our most vulnerable citizens. They also contribute to the economy both by employing people as part of the foundational economy
and enabling people to work by caring for their loved ones. This dual role was recognised in Welsh Government’s ‘Prosperity for all’.

Providers include small ‘mom and pop’ businesses or larger operations provided by UK-wide companies, as well as provision of all sizes by third sector organisations, charities and housing associations as well as some in-house local authority provision. This varied ecosystem enables flexibility of provision and the ability to meet varied wants and needs of citizens. The sector has shown unprecedented resilience and responsiveness in the face of the pandemic. But as the First Minister said the sector was fragile going into the pandemic and has borne a significant proportion of the brunt of covid-19.

Registered providers come together through the National Provider Forum and its member organisations which enable it to share good practice and advise policy makers. Providers are keen to take their place in the stabilisation and recovery phase whilst recognising the toll the past fifteen months has taken on staff. We welcome Welsh Government’s commitment to the Real Living Wage for all care workers and will work through the Social Care Fair Work Forum to bring this to fruition. However, we recognise that this will only be the first step to an appropriately rewarded workforce with opportunities, recognition of differentials and a career structure that sits alongside health. We need to be able to better recruit and retain a workforce to deliver care appropriate to people’s needs in the future.

We are grateful for the support the sector has received during the pandemic from Welsh Government, often via local government and Health Boards. This has kept the sector afloat. As we move into the stabilisation and reconstruction phase we need to identify which pressures remain at which stage of recovery e.g. in terms of increased costs of infection prevention and control, testing, facilitating visiting, or the availability of PPE or appropriate insurance - and how those will continue to be met.

We also look forward to developing the national framework and fee setting structure envisaged in the Rebalancing Care & Support White Paper. We will continue to work through representative organisations at a national level with Welsh Government, Regulators, the National Commissioning Board, WLGA, ADSS and at a regional level through provider representatives on RPBs and with Health Boards and local authorities. We will seek to work in partnership on a day to day basis to, for example, ensure safe discharges while also taking a longer term view, in, for example, seeking to contribute and respond to the development of Population Assessments and Market Stability Reports.
Linking the Social Care Recovery Framework to other recovery planning

The health and social care system is complex, covering a wide range of services provided by both statutory and third sector organisations. It has never been more important for organisations to work together as part of a whole system focused on improving the wellbeing of the people of Wales.

‘A Healthier Wales’ remains the guiding statement of the future direction for the health and social care system. Recovery will not be easy and it is likely to take many years. It is only through collective efforts that recovery from the devastating, wide ranging impacts of COVID-19 can be achieved.

The NHS in Wales is looking to begin this journey through its Annual plans for 2021/22. These plans will set out the local assessment of the impact of COVID-19 and the proposals organisations have to move into the next phase and towards recovery. There is expectation of strong regional collaboration as plans are developed, recognising the wide range of impacts from COVID-19 as outlined in this document. At a national level, existing programmes for example in primary care, planned care or mental health will continue to support consistent approaches to pathway design, service models and standards.

The ‘National Clinical Framework’, published in March 2021, is an important document which will guide healthcare services going forward. The need to work collaboratively with clinical colleagues is important but there is a critical need to ensure that we work in partnership more broadly across sectors.

Planning recovery in the health service will be no less demanding than dealing with COVID-19. It is important that there are reasonable expectations placed on the partners. Recognition of the interdependencies between social care, housing, education, and environment is critical and will determine the pace of recovery that can be achieved.

National Outcomes Framework

The development of an Outcome Framework for Health and Social Care is a recommendation of “A Healthier Wales”. A key aim is to promote an integrated approach across partner organisations to address shared priorities that will deliver the AHW vision. The Framework will not replace existing sector frameworks. It will focus on areas that are shared by health, social care and public health that will improve the health and well-being of the whole population of Wales, whilst ensuring that it complements the role of sector-specific frameworks. It work will prioritise a set of population indicators which will identify where health and social care working together will make a difference to the population of Wales. The concentration on the indicators will also support the formal partnership arrangements in Regional Partnership Boards and Public Services Boards. This joint focus should also support recovery across both sectors as each review their delivery responsibilities and jointly share in learning to transform services following the pandemic.
Impact of Covid 19

The impact of Covid 19 across Wales has been different depending on the demographic, geographic and socio-economic conditions in place at both a regional and a local level. The Welsh Government has increased the collection of data and evidence in relation to the impact of Covid 19 on the social care sector, on our social care workforce and on the general population.

Impact on people

It is clear from the data and evidence that the Covid 19 pandemic has compounded existing inequalities across Wales. Evidence from the Health Commission and the Wales Centre for Public Policy and the Chief Medical Officer for Wales’s special edition annual report 2019 to 2020: protecting our health\(^{17}\) confirms that Covid 19 and the effects of Covid 19 have disproportionately impacted on:

- People with existing health conditions, which are more common in deprived communities
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people\(^{18}\)
- Older people and disabled people of all ages
- People living in care homes\(^{19}\)
- Children and young people\(^{20}\), particularly those who are looked after\(^{21}\)
- Unpaid carers\(^{22}\)
- People in high risk occupations
- People who are paying for care, due to increased costs

Impact on the sector

Within the social care sector, the most significant impact of the Covid 19 pandemic has been identified in the following areas:

- Covid 19 has exacerbated the precarious financial position of care providers – particularly in care homes. This is due to additional financial pressures arising from

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\(^{17}\) Chief Medical Officer for Wales’s special edition annual report 2019 to 2020: protecting our health
\(^{18}\) Emerging findings on the impact of COVID-19 on black and minority ethnic people
\(^{19}\) Written Statement: Action Plan for Care Homes
\(^{20}\) Coronavirus and Me
\(^{21}\) The children looked after population has increased by 2.58% since 31st March 2020
\(^{22}\) The rise in the number of unpaid carers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak
the immediate response to the pandemic, e.g. staffing and carrying Covid 19 related vacancies. Some providers have noted losing significant private income which may affect their own sustainability. In the short-term, Welsh Government intervention has been put in place via local authorities through the Hardship Fund, and through additional care and support funding from Local Health Boards for nursing care; but this will not preclude the need to re-examine the future shape of the sector.

- Adverse impacts on the social care workforce have been identified in relation to their well-being, particularly regarding the sustainability of the pace and intensity of work that has been required and the capacity of the workforce to be able to maintain this. Evidence from HEIW and Social Care Wales suggests that the long term impact on the social care workforce will be significant and packages of support will need to be put in place in order to meet these increased needs.

- Adverse impacts on families and unpaid carers have been identified in relation to exhaustion and some care arrangements breaking down.

- Children and young people in care and vulnerable children and their families have been impacted by the lockdown arrangements, with deprivation, domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health having worsened. Whilst placement stability has been high (overall the numbers of looked after children have risen slightly, but less so than in previous years) increased use of online contact with children and families does not replace face to face contact.

- Adverse impacts on the well-being of people in care homes, including vulnerable children and older people, for example, due to constraints on social contact from restrictions advised on care home visiting, as decisions were taken to balance the rights of all people living in care homes with the need to keep them safe from the virus.

- Adverse impact on the ability of older people to engage with and contribute to their local communities as volunteers and unpaid carers.

- The significant impact of loneliness and isolation on all people, especially children, older people and more vulnerable people and the increased demands for support, including mental health support, especially in cases where face to face provision had to be reduced.

- The overall impact of the pandemic on the well-being of the population of Wales as a whole, and the long term, increased demand on social care services that is expected to result from this.
- The emerging evidence of the impact of Long Covid and the impact that this will have on social care, particularly in relation to the expected increased demand for reablement and domiciliary care.

**Impact on service delivery**

Service delivery across the whole of the social care sector has been significantly impacted by Covid 19. All providers, employers and commissioners across the sector have had to completely change how they provide their services to people who need care and support and to unpaid carers who need support. This has included:

- Ensuring that all people receiving care and support and the social care workforce are kept as safe as possible and the risk of Covid 19 is minimised.

- Re-designing and re-commissioning packages of care to ensure that they are delivered safely, and ensuring continuity of care for those people who are most vulnerable.

- Reducing in-person provision and introducing alternative delivery methods to maintain care and support, particularly through the increased use of digital technology.

- Managing new issues specific to Covid 19 such as the increased use of PPE, Covid 19 testing and Covid 19 vaccinations.
Lessons Learned from Covid 19

The lessons learned from Covid 19 have been significant. An analysis of these lessons has been undertaken by Welsh Government using evidence from our key social care stakeholders as well as Welsh Government policy leads. Many of the lessons learned included in this section are reinforcing issues that we were aware of before Covid, but have been exacerbated due to the pandemic. The key lessons can be summarised as follows:

- The foundations set out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and in ‘A Healthier Wales’ are the right ones for Wales and need to be built on throughout recovery and as we move towards the future.

- The pay, retention and terms and conditions of the social care workforce need to be improved and the overall number of social care practitioners needs to become more stable so that demand can be met.

- The need for a more stable and mixed market, particularly in relation to the stability of care homes, continuity of care and the increased demands for nursing care.

- The increased use of digital technology, such as people being able to access services and support online and the use of tablets in care homes and similar settings to enable residents to maintain regular contact with family and friends.

- The current commissioning models need to be reviewed and more effective and innovative approaches explored.

- The increased use of data, research and scientific evidence to inform decision making at all levels.

- As a result of increased partnership and collaboration across both organisational and geographical boundaries, many new ways of working and innovative practices have been introduced which we must now evaluate and, if appropriate, build on, but in doing so we must be mindful of the impact of these changes on loneliness, isolation and mental health.

- The need for work focusing on re-uniting children with their families, with a focus on revoking care orders, reunification and allowing children and young people to safely leave care, in line with the Welsh Government priority of reducing the number of children currently looked after by local authorities.
• The importance of ensuring the rights of children and young people, disabled people and older people continue to be protected and they are supported to remain active members of local communities.

• The availability and flexibility of respite for unpaid carers needs to be improved and innovative models considered for national roll-out.

• The importance of proper infection prevention and control in social care settings.
Impact of Long Covid

Planning for recovery needs to include planning for Long Covid. Long Covid as a condition has only recently been identified and the long term impact on the social care sector is not yet clear. Welsh Government is currently undertaking work to better understand the scale and impact of Long Covid and the planning and resources that will need to be put in place to manage the demands that Long Covid will place on health and social care. In particular, more research needs to be undertaken to understand the impact that Long Covid will have on the demand for social care services, and this work is currently ongoing. Initial evidence and data modelling indicates that Long Covid is one of a range of factors likely to increase demand, particularly in the areas of reablement and domiciliary care services:

Workforce

- **Recruitment** – recognising that recruitment as well as retention is essential to increase capacity in intermediate and longer-term social care to respond to additional demand arising from the range of direct and indirect harms arising from Covid.
- **Managing sickness** - there may be an impact on the capacity of the workforce from colleagues with Long Covid. Early indications are that recovery can take some months for some people, and that the usual rate of phased return to work may be insufficient to enable affected members of the social care workforce to return to their previous level of work.

Data

- **Understanding of local data** – there is a clear need to increase the usable data available across all types of services, as well as the importance of regions understanding their local data (including the outputs of the Right-sizing Community Services for Discharge project), to inform decisions to invest in areas where there are consistent gaps between demand and capacity.

Demand planning

- **Additional demand** - we can expect to see a Covid-related additional increase in demand for reablement, longer-term packages of care and care home placements, potentially up to winter 2021. This is additional to business as usual activity and is

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23 In October 2020 NICE defined Long Covid (or post-Covid 19 syndrome) as “Signs and symptoms that develop during or following an infection consistent with Covid-19, continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis”.

24 [Right-sizing Community Services for Discharge.pdf](adss.cymru): based on Professor John Bolton, Reducing delays in hospital transfers of care for older people Key messages in planning and commissioning (Institute of Public Care, Oxford Brookes University)
due in part to the impact of demand for recovery and rehabilitation post-Covid, including Long Covid.

Local Health Boards and Local Authorities are developing and establishing appropriate models, with embedded primary and community services, for managing the demands of Long Covid. The Welsh Government has set out how it will work with the NHS on Long Covid through the Adferiad (Recovery) Long Covid programme\textsuperscript{25}.

\textsuperscript{25} Adferiad (Recovery) long COVID programme
Related Publications

Leading Wales out of the coronavirus pandemic: a framework for recovery - 24 April 2020

COVID-19 reconstruction: challenges and priorities – 6 October 2020

Health and Social Care in Wales COVID 19: Looking Forward – 22 March 2021

Future Generations Commissioner’s recovery plan
Future Generations Commissioner’s recovery plan

Older People’s Commissioner
Leave no-one behind - Action for an age-friendly recovery

Children’s Commissioner
Coronavirus and Us - Children’s Commissioner for Wales (childcomwales.org.uk)

Audit Wales
Part 1: COVID-19 a catalyst for positive change? | Audit Wales (wao.gov.uk)

Part 2: COVID-19 a catalyst for positive change? | Audit Wales (wao.gov.uk)

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Equality and human rights in residential care in Wales during coronavirus

England
£7 billion for NHS and social care for COVID-19 response and recovery
Northern Ireland
Minister launches Strategic Framework for rebuilding services

Scotland