

Cafodd yr ymateb hwn ei gyflwyno i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Flaenoriaethau'r Chweched Senedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [Sixth Senedd Priorities](#)

HSC PSS 100

Ymateb gan: | Response from: Unison Cymru Wales

Blaenoriaethau cychwynnol a nodwyd gan y Pwyllgor Initial priorities identified by the Committee

Mae'r Pwyllgor wedi nodi nifer o flaenoriaethau posibl ar gyfer ei waith yn ystod y Chweched Senedd, gan gynnwys: iechyd y cyhoedd a gwaith ataliol; y gweithlu iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol, gan gynnwys diwylliant sefydliadol a lles staff; mynediad at wasanaethau iechyd meddwl; arloesi ar sail tystiolaeth ym maes iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol; cymorth a gwasanaethau i ofalwyr di-dâl; mynediad at wasanaethau adsefydlu i'r rhai sydd wedi cael COVID ac i eraill; a mynediad at wasanaethau ar gyfer cyflyrau cronig tymor hir, gan gynnwys cyflyrau cyhyrysgerbydol.

The Committee has identified several potential priorities for work during the Sixth Senedd, including: public health and prevention; the health and social care workforce, including organisational culture and staff wellbeing; access to mental health services; evidence-based innovation in health and social care; support and services for unpaid carers; access to COVID and non-COVID rehabilitation services; and access to services for long-term chronic conditions, including musculoskeletal conditions.

C1. Pa rai o'r materion uchod ydych chi'n credu y dylai'r Pwyllgor roi blaenoriaeth iddynt, a pham?

Q1. Which of the issues listed above do you think should be a priority, and why?

The health and social care workforce - organisational culture and staff wellbeing

NHS Wales - The development of a "Just and Learning Culture" has been explored in numerous health boards in Wales to improve organisational culture away from blaming individuals in the case of an incident, towards a more systematic exploration of what led to an incident. It seeks to move away from blame culture to a culture whereby professionals can learn without fear of retribution. This does not mean that workers aren't held accountable where there is gross negligence or deliberate acts, but it is a culture that recognises that human and systematic errors can occur, and investigations focus on why an error occurs rather than who caused it.



The concept was developed by Mersey Care NHS Trust in response to the very high levels of suspensions and disciplinary cases raised in relation to patient safety incidents. Further exploration found that staff didn't feel empowered to speak up when things went wrong for fear of repercussions. Instead, valuable learning opportunities were being missed and errors were being repeated.

Instead, following research and exploration of other industries, the Trust was inspired to develop a zero-blame culture that would provide a safe place to work and one where staff would be treated fairly and with compassion – leading to the development of a just and learning culture.

The aim is to repair trust and relationship and a collaborative approach to overcoming or address the issue at hand. Key elements of the approach include: working in partnership with trade unions; recognising the importance of language as a part of a new culture, moving away from inferring something has gone “wrong”; acknowledge risk of hindsight bias; move focus from policies to punish towards policies that assist good practice; focus on informal processes as a preference over formal; forward looking accountability and intervention; ensuring staff feel safe to speak up; sharing learning, which can be anonymised if necessary; regularly refreshing the workforce of these principles.

Evidence demonstrates that Mersey Care NHS Trust has vastly improved in terms of the reduction in disciplinaries, reduction of suspensions, and improvements in staff morale, engagement, and motivation. This has not only improved the operation of the Trust but has significantly reduced the financial burden associated with such policies and procedures. The Trust has also received more positive responses to staff surveys.

Similar issues to those identified in Mersey Care NHS Trust can be seen in Health Boards in Wales and the Just and Learning culture is one way to help address these issues. Given the impact the pandemic has had on staff, now would be the optimum time to try to implement a Just and Learning culture across NHS Wales, and this should be prioritised. We need a fuller understanding, where it has been piloted, of the impact it has had.

The committee could scope the work that's already been undertaken across NHS Wales to better understand the value of such an approach within health services and seek additional funding through budget scrutiny as well holding the relevant Ministers to account on the issues.

Social Care – Whilst a Just and Learning culture would be desirable within the social care context, UNISON recognises that the starting point is very different. UNISON is clear, it is of key priority that proper industry wide collective bargaining is applied across the entire social care sector. Collective bargaining would at least begin to address the industrial recognition that social care workers need and would begin to address the challenge of coordinating improved standards across a sector which is hugely fragmented.

Furthermore, social care is highly skilled and increasingly complex. There is no one-size approach. People are living longer and with more complex health needs that need tailored support. Collective bargaining can help to properly recognise the skills and demands in care through properly negotiated terms, conditions and pay, which will in turn support fair reward. We cannot expect to recruit and retain a high-quality workforce for the long-term if we offer poor quality jobs, pay, terms and conditions. There must be a shift away from reducing costs, which inevitably leads to labour cost reductions, towards the delivery of quality care.

The current pay, terms and conditions for many social care workers are poor – meeting only the legal minimum standards. We need to encourage more workers into social care for the long-term and we need to ensure workers are fairly rewarded for their work. There are examples of good employers, but unless there are fair and decent sector standards across the piece, the sector will remain fractured and unstable.

Decent conditions of work and fair pay cannot be established without an industry-wide approach. Collective bargaining is urgently needed to drive forward the shared interests of employers, care recipients, and the social care workforce. True change can only be achieved on a collective basis as reaffirming rights and seeking fair reward on an individual worker or employer by employer will not create the wholesale change the sector needs. Fair pay must go beyond the real living wage and must be a proper, fully negotiated pay strategy that builds in differentials between roles in social care and recognises the differing levels of skills required and varying responsibilities, so promoting personal development and career pathways.

The absence of collective bargaining in the sector diminishes the worker voice. Trade unions have been raising issues of concern about the social care sector for many years. UNISON has consistently talked about the problem with fragmented services - the sustainability of the workforce, the sustainability of contracts, poor employment practices, workforce retention, increasingly complex care needs – for many years. The COVID pandemic has exacerbated the situation and truly brought to light the enormity of the problem. This has been recognised by governments both on a UK and Wales basis, and we have seen numerous attempts to overcome these challenges including the infection control fund, and government awarded bonus payments. The trade unions are not separate entities – the trade unions are the workers and had the warnings of the unions/the workers been heeded earlier then arguably social care would be in a much healthier position. The worker/union voice must not be ignored further – collective bargaining must be established across the whole sector.

We expect to see legislation on public procurement and specifically on national framework agreements related to social care progress through the Senedd this term. It is essential this legislation go as far as possible for its potential to be a mechanism to help deliver fair work to be fully realised. Scrutiny of such legislation is key to ensuring it properly addresses these important issues within the care sector.

Staff wellbeing – the wellbeing of the workforce across health and social care is of paramount importance. The resilience of staff is, understandably, at a low given the experiences since March 2020. Many workers have suffered both physically and mentally because of the pandemic. Vacancy levels are high across the sector, putting additional pressures on an already strained workforce. Pay is clearly one factor that helps people to feel valued and UNISON has called for a fair pay increase for NHS workers and fair pay more broadly across the social care sector. The entire sector needs additional funding specifically for the purposes of increasing pay. In addition, workers need to have paid time to enable them to undertake training and development, with clear career paths and opportunities. In addition to this and considering the trauma staff may have experienced over the course of the pandemic, it is crucial the entire workforce has access to mental health services and support where they are needed.

Workforce planning is also an important factor in dealing with staff wellbeing – health and social care must be attractive places to work with good career pathways to ensure a sustainable and motivated workforce.

Blaenoriaethau allweddol ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd

Key priorities for the Sixth Senedd

C2. Yn eich barn chi, pa flaenoriaethau allweddol eraill y dylai'r Pwyllgor eu hystyried yn ystod y Chweched Senedd mewn perthynas â:

- a) **gwasanaethau iechyd;**
- b) **gofal cymdeithasol a gofalwyr;**
- c) **adfer yn dilyn COVID?**

Q2. In your view, what other key priorities should the Committee consider during the Sixth Senedd in relation to:

- a) **health services;**
 - b) **social care and carers;**
 - c) **COVID recovery?**
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Gwasanaethau iechyd

Health services

Outsourcing – UNISON has growing concerns about possible outsourcing in NHS Wales. Pharmacy and renal services have both experienced attempts to privatise. UNISON would wholly oppose this

Gofal Cymdeithasol a gofalwyr

Social care and carers

Social care has recently been described as beyond crisis. The issues within social care must be addressed as a matter of urgency, and consideration must be paid to insourcing of social care back into the public sector. A notion of a National Care Service for Wales must be explored. There are growing examples where competition for contracts is based on the availability and numbers of staff to be able to provide a service. The sector is on the brink of collapse.

Unrhyw faterion eraill

Any other issues

C3. A oes unrhyw faterion eraill yr hoffech dynnu sylw'r Pwyllgor atynt?

Q3. Are there any other issues you wish to draw to the Committee's attention?

Health and social care integration is ongoing and must remain a key priority. Good examples of successful integration must be shared as benchmarking opportunities. A two-tier workforce must be guarded against.