



Ein cyf/Our ref JMSS/00609/23

Councillor Freya Bletsoe

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09 October 2023

Dear Councillor Freya Bletsoe,

Thank you for your letter of 21 September 2023, outlining the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2's concerns about the fragility of the workforce, the challenges faced recruiting and retaining staff and the need for a Welsh National pay and Terms and Conditions framework.

Welsh Government acknowledges the challenges facing our social care workforce and this is why our programmes of work, investment and our work with stakeholder's targets supporting a resilient and stable workforce. To achieve workforce stability and sufficiency, we believe a holistic and systematic approach is necessary. As a government we are focusing on creating a firm foundation on which we can build our workforce. Areas of work as examples include:

- Our £10 million over three years investment in the social worker bursary to make the social work degree financial attainable and an attractive career. The social worker bursary has seen an approximate 29% increase in take up in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23. We are confident that the increased offer of support has helped draw more students into taking up social work as a career.
- Our funding through Social Care Wales supports local authorities 'grow your own scheme' which supports paid employment and funded social work training. SCW is estimating around 150 "grow your own" students for the 2023/24 academic year.

These positive figures come with the realism that social work training can take between 2-6 years, and so it will take time to feel the impact within the workforce, but this is promising for the future.

The WLGA is currently leading work focusing on terms and conditions for social workers, including looking at the national approaches. This is to support and attract individuals into the profession, but also to also reduce movement of qualified staff between local authorities due to variations in terms and conditions.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Through the Social Care Fair Work Forum trade unions, employers and Welsh Government continue to work in social partnership on what steps can be taken to improve terms and conditions for social care workers, with improved opportunities for career progression. This includes the development of a draft Pay and Progression Framework for the social care sector that aims to provide more consistent pay, progression and development opportunities by setting out broad bands of roles within social care, aligned with skills, learning and pay levels.

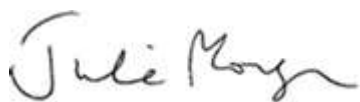
The draft Framework was included in the wider Welsh Government consultation on the Rebalancing Care and Support Programme which you mentioned in your letter, the outcome on both will be published in due course. However, a workshop has been arranged in the Autumn for the Forum to consider the Pay and Progression Framework consultation responses and agree on the next steps moving forward.

As a Government, we have shown our commitment to improving pay by investing a further £70 million this financial year to ensure all social care workers continue to get paid at least the Real Living Wage.

We continue to invest in SCW's national recruitment campaign, WeCare.Wales, which promotes the variety of roles available in social care through web-based materials and television adverts. This is having a real impact in terms of people accessing these materials about social care work and people feeling more positive about working in the sector. SCW's web-based materials are used across the independent and public sector to support recruitment into care roles for example through careers fairs, working with employability partners such as Careers Wales, and other outreach activities. SCW has also established a jobs portal for social care to help bring people looking for a role together with employers that are seeking to fill vacancies.

We know that none of these areas of work are quick fixes, but we are committed to working with the sector and stakeholders to support both recruitment and retention in social care. The demand for social care will continue to grow, so it's essential we all have effective workforce planning systems in place to meet this demand. With partnership working and the dedicated and skilled workforce already in place, I am committed to overcoming our current challenges.

Yours sincerely,



**Julie Morgan AS/MS**

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Deputy Minister for Social Services