

Preparing the social care sector in Wales for Brexit

£200,000 has been allocated from the Welsh Government's EU Transition Fund to fund research into how the Brexit process could impact on the social care workforce in Wales, and to help the sector plan for any eventualities.

The £50m EU Transition Fund was set up to help business, public services and others prepare for the impacts of Brexit.

The research will collect data on the make-up of the social care workforce and determine whether there are any geographic regions or particular roles within social care that are particularly dependent on EU nationals, which could be adversely affected, depending on the transitional arrangements and migration policy agreed by the UK Government and the European Union.

Having a clear understanding of the make-up of the social care workforce and the extent of EU nationals currently employed will allow stakeholders across local government, the independent and third sectors to identify whether there are any areas of particular vulnerability and to support them plan accordingly to ensure continuity of care.

It will allow stakeholders to ensure any contingency planning and preparations are proportionate to the level of potential risk. It will also provide reassurance both to the sector and to people receiving care and their families.

Social Care Minister, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"Social care is a significant employer and contributor to the economy in Wales, with the adult social care sector employing more than 80,000 staff across Wales. The care and support provided by the workforce protects and supports some of the most vulnerable members of our society. This is why it is a cross-cutting priority within our national strategy, Prosperity for All.

"The sector is already facing a range of pressures, including recruitment and retention difficulties and increasing demand for care. The potential uncertainty Brexit could cause the workforce, especially for EU nationals and nationals who are from outside the EU, exacerbate these challenges. It is also important everyone working in social care feels welcome and valued for the role they play in delivering care to the people of Wales. This is why it's essential the UK negotiates a sensible Brexit, which puts people, jobs and the economy first.

"Having robust and complete nationality data which covers all aspects of the market, as well as other workforce data which could effectively be collected at the same time, will enable the Welsh

Government to support the sector in identifying and planning for its workforce requirements post-Brexit.”

Gerry Evans, Director of Regulation and Intelligence and Deputy CEO at Social Care Wales said:

“Having a skilled workforce with the right values is at the core of delivering high quality social care in Wales. Ensuring we have such a workforce to meet the growing demand for care and support is one of the main challenges the sector faces over the next decade.

“We know that individuals from the EU have made an important contribution to delivering quality care in Wales and this research will help us to understand approaches that need to be adopted to maintain and extend the social care workforce into the future. Social Care Wales looks forward to working with Welsh Government on this important work over the coming months.”

The data gathered will also be integral to the development of a targeted workforce strategy which will contribute to the delivery of A Healthier Wales, the Welsh Government’s long Term Plan for Health and Social Care in Wales.