



Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**  
Social Care **Wales**



# A strategic approach to social care data in Wales

Statement of Strategic Intent

March 2021



Noddir gan  
**Lywodraeth Cymru**  
Sponsored by  
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# Introduction

Our ambition in Wales is that everyone will have access to care and support that improves their well-being and delivers the outcomes that matter to them. We now have a unique opportunity for transformational change in how we collect, manage, store, analyse and use social care data, as well as information from other sources such as health, to achieve this. Better use of data will help us provide higher quality, dignified care and support for the people of Wales.

The **Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014**, the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** and **A Healthier Wales: Our Plan for Health and Social Care (2018)** set out the principles for a more joined up health and social care system in Wales. Our **National Clinical Framework for Wales** also describes the creation of a Learning Health and Care System based on a data-driven approach. The **Adult social care – Wales review (2019)** by the Office for Statistics Regulation found gaps and quality issues in this area, raising the question of how we embed greater openness, scrutiny and transparency in official statistics.

These principles from across legislation, policy and regulation are the foundations for this Statement of Strategic Intent. It explains the rationale, vision, and strategic objectives for a new Social Care Data Strategy for Wales.

## Why now?

All around us, a new information revolution is underway. Driven by advances in technology, the volume of available data is growing fast. The COVID-19 public health crisis has shone a light on the importance of public data and official statistics and the role they play in helping us understand the world.



The public sector is not yet fully harnessing these opportunities in a coordinated way. It is a mixed picture with some colleagues already using data more effectively, though often without the appropriate support, frameworks, disciplines, tools and resources to really succeed. The time has come to make up this ground and deliver a new data strategy for social care in Wales.

### Who is involved?

This Statement has been created with the help of leaders and organisations from across Welsh social care and its partners, including the Welsh Government, health, local authorities, independent and third sector organisations, and researchers, as well as those with lived experience of giving and receiving care and support. It is our formal commitment to work together with colleagues from across health and social care sectors to build a comprehensive and inclusive social care data strategy, and work towards a stronger, data empowered social care service in Wales.

In Wales we have a chance to demonstrate what a data-rich nation can achieve for its citizens, with social care playing a critical role. This document is the next step in realising that vision.

We would like to thank everyone who has been involved in this work. Most of all, we wish to thank those who have shared their experience of receiving or providing care. We will draw on your experience and views wherever we can.



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**Julie Morgan**  
Deputy Minister for Health and  
Social Services



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**Mick Giannasi**  
Chair, Social Care Wales

# Executive Summary

## Why is a data strategy for social care needed?

There have been significant developments in what is possible through the effective use of quality data. It will help us meet the needs of people and communities, and everyone who plays a role in creating or using data should be involved. Making it easier to gather and use data will improve care decisions and planning. It will allow people living in Wales to better communicate their needs and access better and more personalised advice, care and support.

In November 2020, a discovery report was published as a first step towards using data more effectively to drive social care outcomes. It recommended that a data strategy be created for social care in Wales to lay out a single vision of how data should be collected, managed, stored, analysed and used. Our aim is to bring about the best possible outcomes while engaging with people in Wales about how their data might be used for their benefit.

## The actions we will take

Social Care Wales has been asked to lead on developing a strategy for social care data in Wales, in collaboration with Welsh Government and other partners. We will work towards greater public engagement; improved decision making; creation of a strong data culture and data leadership; improved research and analysis; safe, ethical data sharing and collaboration; acquiring the data we need to identify and address inequalities; data standardisation; and improvement of data skills in the workforce.

## What the social care system in Wales will look like as a result

A data strategy will lead us towards a system of personalised, co-designed care, with a focus on prevention. More consistent data enables trusted decisions, underpinned by evidence, which are supported in turn by improvements to research and analysis. There will be defined ownership and accountability in how we use data. All of this will be possible thanks to a data-enabled workforce, who will have the skills and tools to create and use improved data.



# 1. Why focus on data?

This document sets the direction for a future social care data strategy for Wales and builds on a period of discussion and consultation, which we documented in [A strategic approach to social care data in Wales - Report on the discovery phase](#) in November 2020.

By *social care data*, we mean any information collected while providing a social care service, or in preparation for doing so. It is complemented by information collected outside of the delivery of social care services, such as that relating to health, education, housing, or other areas. The information we are concerned with goes beyond numbers; it is both qualitative and quantitative by nature, and is stored electronically, on paper, and in other mediums.

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## **There have been significant developments in what is possible through effective use of quality data.**

Society is being changed by new digital technologies, the internet, and a significant rise in the amount of data both created and used every day.

**We can all contribute.** By understanding how we can safely and effectively use and share data, we will contribute to our broader goals for health and wellbeing in Wales. That also means explaining to people in Wales how their data is used, and how it might be used in future to benefit them.

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**We can and should make it easier to gather and use social care data.** By analysing data to improve care decisions and planning we can better help our services match current and future needs at a local, regional and national level. Equally, we can make data about people living in Wales available to them so they can use it to communicate their needs and access better and more personalised advice, care and support.

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**Making data a priority will help us meet the needs of people and communities.** Having good data helps to improve services. This is especially important after the COVID-19 public health crisis and the challenge it has brought to many public, independent and third sector services. Accurate information helps us recognise where people need help so we can be more effective in providing it. It gives a better understanding of inequalities in care and outcomes that must be addressed. But better, more accurate data also requires more time, energy, and resources.

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## 2. Where will we focus our action?

This Statement of Strategic Intent is the first step towards a programme of work with the resources and backing to effect change. The **Strategic Objectives**, below, describe the types of initiatives this work will pursue:

- 1 Discussing with the public** to understand their views about the use of data

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- 2 Supporting better decisions around data priorities** to achieve the best outcomes for people in Wales

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- 3 Building a strong data culture and sponsoring leadership** that appreciates and clearly articulates the value of social care data, and uses the insight it provides to drive innovation and take decisions

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- 4 Providing support for improving the use of our data in research and analysis**, so that all organisations with an interest in care can work together more closely, conducting and sharing analysis so we all understand what can work

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- 5 Enabling safe and ethical data sharing and collaboration.** This could include identifying sharing opportunities, reducing the burden of providing and collecting data by encouraging its reuse, unblocking barriers to sharing, and addressing concerns or worries. It could also involve working together in different ways and making sure the systems we use work together well.

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- 6 Increasing and improving the data we need to identify and address inequalities in social care**, in when and how people with the full range of protected characteristics receive care and support, and to ensure that social care is a safe and fair place for all to work in.

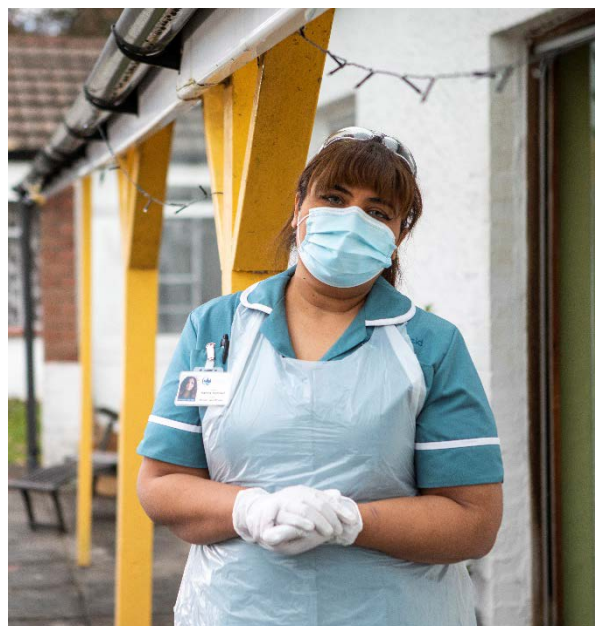
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- 7 Adopting the same standards and design principles** in how we collect, use and maintain data. If we do things in similar ways our data will be more consistent, higher quality, and easier to use and compare.

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- 8 Improving data skills across social care** by identifying and encouraging the skills that matter and helping everyone who works in social care to use data and other types of evidence more effectively in their work.

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# 3. Our vision for the future of social care data in Wales

If we pursue these initiatives, what will happen? Below sets out a clear vision of what we want the social care system in Wales to look like as a result of the data strategy.

## **Personalised, co-designed care**

Care and support are tailored around the individual receiving them. People understand and trust how their data is used and can see how effective the services they receive are and ensure that they are able to achieve the well-being outcomes that matter most to them. They need not provide the same information repeatedly.

## **Better, integrated outcomes**

Social care data can be linked to health, housing, voluntary sector data and more, creating one seamless service user journey and enabling organisations across the system to tailor their support to the whole person.

## **A focus on prevention**

Local and national organisations will be able to identify trends and patterns, and to gather and use evidence to provide support to people and families before issues escalate. Trends can be used to model future scenarios, so that services can adapt to changing needs.

## **Consistent data, trusted decisions**

Standardised, comparable, high-quality data will support decision-making at all levels. We understand what is happening and where, and how well things are working across the system, which will help to prevent or detect issues.

## **A data-enabled workforce**

People working in social care know what data to collect, how to use it for maximum impact, and where it is safe and acceptable to share it. Our workforce data helps us to understand the people who deliver care and support and helps us plan. Organisations use data in combination with the experiences of care professionals, to answer the questions that matter.

## **Informed decision-making supported by the evidence**

Local and national organisations use up-to-date data to develop evidence-driven business cases, understand challenges and target their investment in data wisely.

## **Stronger research capability**

Datasets will be better integrated, managed and stored across Wales, enabling researchers, regulators and policymakers to see the 'bigger picture'. They can make informed recommendations on how to improve care and support and future needs.

## **Defined ownership and accountability**

We know which agencies lead and support each part of the data strategy. We have informed leadership making purposeful decisions about how we use data.





### Citizen or person who uses care and support



I feel like my voice is finally being heard. I am able to co-produce my care plan based on my needs, and the data recorded about me supports that. Any new person working with me can use these data to get an overview of who I am as a person, not just my needs, and so I don't have to tell my story all over again.



### Practitioner



When I start supporting someone new, I now have access to a more detailed care history, which helps me build our relationship. I can also use the more intuitive interface to work together with the person I support, so we can work together on their long-term outcomes.



### Director of Social Services



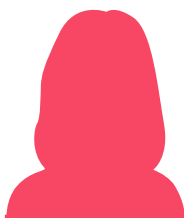
I feel confident in the data I can access, and it looks right – it corresponds to the strengths and challenges we face. I can more easily use these insights to plan and budget effectively, and I now know where I need to invest to achieve the greatest improvement.



### Data Analyst



I have access to better data analysis tools which means I can automate more mundane tasks. I now spend more time providing deeper insight on trends and exceptions, developing and using evidence, and using data to support business cases for change.



### Regulator



It is much easier for me to understand the quality of social care in Wales, because I can trust the data available to me and I know that it's comparable between places. This allows me to focus on supporting innovation and improvement, such as by developing and sharing best practice.



### Policymaker



There is a named lead organisation for social care data in Wales, which acts as a broker, expert and champion. I can now model and predict future trends and use this to help the sector plan and deliver seamless, place-based care that is digitally-enabled and responsive to people's needs.



## 4. What comes next?

We are in the process of creating something new and exciting for social care in Wales. We want to invite organisations involved in social care, and people with lived experience of receiving or providing care from across Wales, to help create and deliver this data strategy. We will continue speaking and engaging with people across the care system as we develop it, creating a journey and culture that will carry with us all those involved in the sector.

Our new strategy will propose a social care data charter. This will lay out the guiding principles for how we use of social care data across Wales, to ensure it is used to improve well-being outcomes for people who need care and support and unpaid carers who need support. We invite those with lived experience of receiving or providing care to help create and endorse its principles.

We thank those who have already participated in shaping this work and look forward to more engagement as we move into implementation. Our achievements will be measured by how well we work with each other. And throughout this work, we will remain focussed on the most important measure of all: improving the outcomes and experiences for those giving and receiving care and support.



# Contact details

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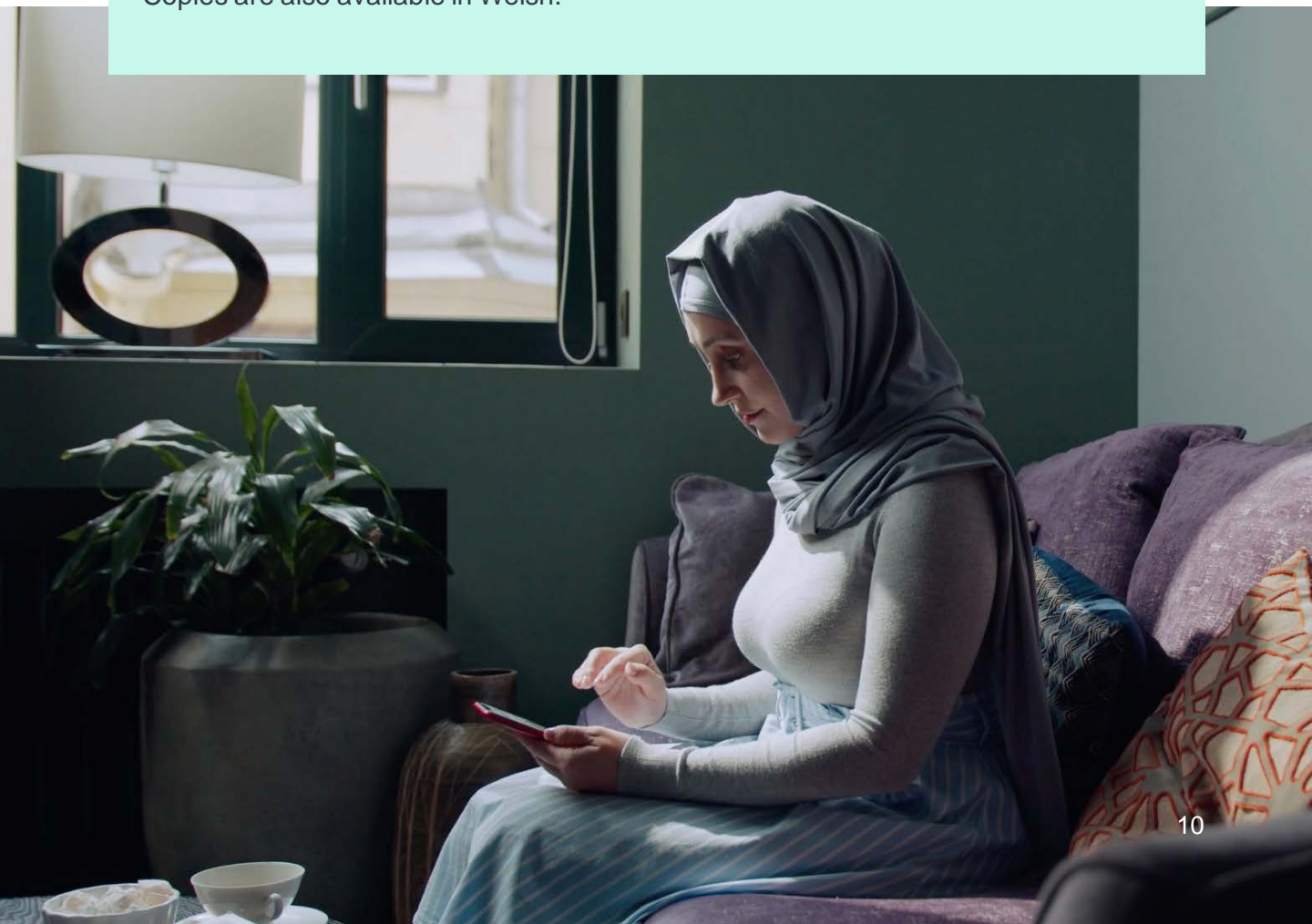
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