

29/04/2020

Vaughan Gething MS
Minister for Health and Social Services
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
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CF99 1SN

Dear Minister

We wish to raise our joint concerns over the capacity of the social work profession in Wales to cope with the current challenges of the pandemic and the likelihood of increased need for social work support, as we enter a post pandemic world.

Prior to the pandemic, BASW and Social Work Union had been campaigning on improving working conditions for social workers, based on the empirical evidence of our 2017 and 2018 working conditions research

<https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/Working%20Conditions%20%20Stress%20%282018%29%20pdf.pdf>

Wales has a social work recruitment crisis and the pandemic has not eased this problem it has exposed it.

The Social Care Wales workforce data reveals that there were 3,300 social work vacancies in Wales between March 2018/19 (we've not seen the latest data) applications to study social work have fallen and there has been a real terms loss in the number of social posts available in children's services, in recent years, by 2.1% (Social Care Wales data)

Social Care Wales wrote to 900+ social workers who had left the register within the last 3 years and only 60 have so far responded to the call. Recent communication with ADSS Cymru who received responses from 17 of the 22 local authorities, reveal that only 4 former social workers have been re-employed. We also know that the workforce is overwhelmingly female with an average age of 46 years and fall within the 'sandwich generation' of women who have caring responsibility either end of the caring spectrum. We need to understand how this demographic of social workers will be impacted by the pandemic.

We have the following questions:

- What is the optimal numbers of social workers needed to meet current and future demand and how is this calculation made?
- What is the accurate number of social workers that have been re-employed from the temporary register and where?

- Are accurate levels of sickness, in comparison to this time last year, being collated and what is the link to Covid-19?
- How many social workers are shielding because they are in this vulnerable category?
- How many social workers have been recruited as a result of the WeCareWales campaign?
- How many social workers have been tested for corona virus, as the data does not specify social workers?

We are asking that Welsh Government initiates an enquiry into the resilience and capacity of the social work workforce in Wales, to meet the current and future workforce challenges exposed and added to, by the pandemic.

Your sincerely

Allison Hulmes

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John McGowan

General Secretary, Social Workers Union

