

# "Making the Case for Care"

**A scoping study on the impact of care provision on the Welsh economy**

Executive Summary

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# Background

This research was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government. It was an exploratory study looking at the provision of child, elderly and other dependent care as a barrier to employment. Consideration was given to the effects of care on gender equality in the labour market. It also examined the role of care within the social economy and made recommendations on how to strengthen and grow the sector.

The scoping study looked at social care provision in the context of working and caring. It also explored social care provision from an economic perspective. The study was a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, consultation based evidence, information and research findings.

The study was completed in conjunction with the University of Wales, Bangor, and funded through HELP WALES and the Welsh Assembly Government.

*For further information on this study please contact*

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# Main Findings

## Accessibility, affordability and quality of care

- The lack of accessible, affordable and good quality childcare is still one of the main barriers stopping women from entering employment and staying in their jobs.
- Issues for parents of children with disabilities are often more complex. Support services need to be tailored to meet their specific needs.
- Care provision as a whole is under funded in Wales. Joint approaches to securing an effective childcare framework is crucial to the success of the sector.
- There is a need to address provision in rural areas, and to investigate further the needs of people who may be doubly disadvantaged such as lone parents.



## Working and caring

■ There is a need to look at new ways of helping unemployed carers into the labour market. This would include investigating the benefits trap that still exists; recognition of transferable skills into the workforce and developing work life balance policies and practices.

## Gender equality and the gender pay gap

■ Women's careers suffer as a result of poor childcare provision. Often this means that they take lower paid jobs, in order to fit in with their caring responsibilities.

■ The study identifies the link between the lack of childcare provision in Wales and the gender pay gap. Further research is needed on this subject to form recommendations on the way forward.

## Care and the economy – role and realisation

■ Evidence in the study shows that there is need to strengthen the social economy, and that care plays an integral part in this expansion.



■ According to consultation, care is currently not fully realised as part of the social economy in Wales. This is due to many community care businesses not seeing themselves as a business, but rather as a provider of community services. Many also don't feel recognised as part of the economy, and consequently feel undervalued.

■ By increasing and improving care provision locally and nationally, the social economy will flourish, and the essential role of care will begin to be realised.

## Determining the value of care

■ Carers are an integral part of the economy. Without their unpaid contribution, the structure of social care in Wales would collapse.

■ Even though carers themselves are not paid for the care they provide, and even though they may work full or part-time they are often unseen and unrecognised.

■ The study also highlights that carers have an enormous part to play in the economy. Therefore, the role of carers in the economy needs to be recognised, and fully understood – only then can the economy as a whole, develop to its full potential.



# Conclusions and Recommendations

- ❑ Explore and develop innovative initiatives and pilot projects to address the accessibility, affordability of quality of care in Wales
- ❑ Research the feasibility of setting up a care sector skills council for Wales
- ❑ Investigate the possibility of free or subsidised childcare for all children under 3 years of age
- ❑ Explore ways of establishing a more comprehensive support service for young carers in schools
- ❑ Identify and support an all Wales organisation to take forward Work Life Balance :
  - developing models of good practice
  - developing and delivering training packages for employers

## **Developing care in the social economy:**

- continuation of specialised support services
- raising the profile of the care sector in conjunction with other partners
- funding the development of existing care businesses
- promoting an entrepreneurship culture for care in the social economy
- explore ways of minimising the paper work for the registration process of child and elder care businesses
- ❑ Consider ways of increasing salaries of care workers in the social economy, and the Welsh economy as a whole
- ❑ Develop upon existing models of good practice