

Care, co-operation and a fairer future for Wales

Neil Duncan-Jordan's [social care post on](#) identifies the injustice in social care: people's financial security can depend on whether their needs are classified as healthcare or social support. His call for collective funding deserves support. Another review will achieve little unless it changes who pays, who provides and who decides.

For Wales, however, the debate must recognise devolution. Social care policy is devolved, and England's charging thresholds should not be presented as Welsh rules. Wales must shape its own settlement, while UK decisions on immigration and public spending influence what Welsh services can deliver.

Wales already has foundations for a different approach. Section 16 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 requires councils to promote social enterprises, co-operatives, user-led services and the third sector in care and support. That duty should drive commissioning decisions, rather than remain an aspiration buried in policy documents.

The Welsh ambition for a national care service also offers an opportunity to connect consistent entitlements with local accountability. National standards should guarantee quality and fairness, while communities help shape delivery. Rural distances, Welsh-language provision and the experiences of disabled people require particular attention.

Duncan-Jordan is right to question the extraction of public funding through corporate profits. However, public ownership and democratic co-operative provision can complement one another. The choice need not be restricted to council management or commercial outsourcing. Properly supported care co-operatives offer another route, rooted in service rather than investor returns.

Co-operative ownership matters because it can give care workers and people receiving support meaningful influence over decisions. Multi-stakeholder models can involve unpaid carers too, without allowing anyone's voice to displace the wishes of the person receiving care. Surpluses can support better services, training and community benefit.

The experience of Cartrefi Cymru Co-operative is that the multistakeholder model can also add significant social value well beyond contractual arrangements through harnessing local engagement and support that would be unavailable to commercial for-profit organisations.

Ownership alone guarantees nothing. Co-operatives need adequate funding, strong safeguarding, transparent governance and independent regulation. Councils should provide realistic contracts, development support and opportunities for smaller providers, rather than procurement processes that favour organisations with the largest bidding departments.

His workforce argument is equally important. Fair pay must include paid travel time, secure hours, supervision, training and trade union representation. Wales's work on fair pay arrangements provides a platform, but commitments must translate into workers' everyday conditions. Valuing care means funding the time needed for relationships.

Migrant workers must also be treated as people building lives and communities. Immigration changes that undermine security can damage retention and continuity. Welsh care ambitions

therefore require engagement with Westminster, alongside effective protection against exploitation.

Unpaid carers need more than recognition: dependable breaks, practical assistance and accessible support. Reform must also address working-age disabled adults, independent living and prevention, rather than treating social care solely as a question of older people's accommodation.

Duncan-Jordan's strongest message is that risk should be shared across society. Wales can add democratic ownership and co-production to that principle. As the Welsh Young Co-operators say: "Nothing About Us Without Us" must shape reform from the outset. A fair care system should combine public responsibility, decent work and community wealth building, with dignity and choice guiding every decision about the support people need throughout their lives.