



Meet your Member of the Senedd guide

Care For Equality
Campaign

Leonard
Cheshire



Why we're campaigning on social care

Good social care can bring opportunity, improve quality of life, and enable people to live with dignity and independence. Care can include support for everyday tasks like washing or eating, and also helps disabled people connect with their communities. Good care can widen disabled people's opportunities, helping them access education, work and social activities.

There is a desperate need to improve the profile of social care, and value and champion staff who care for and support disabled people in Wales. Good social care relies on a supported and committed workforce with good career prospects. Good care has the person at the heart of delivery and is tailored to the individual, affording them voice, choice and control.

The Welsh Government has expressed their commitment to improving social care in their Programme for Government 2021-2026, in which they promised care workers the National Living Wage, to set up a National Care Office to help ensure consistency of care across Wales and to pursue a solution to make care free for all at the point of need. We need to ensure that the Welsh Government prioritises fair pay for care workers and promotes direct payments as a tool for greater independence.

What can you do to help?

We're asking you to meet your MS and let them know why disabled people need to be at the heart of social care reforms. We want you to share why you think it's important that disabled people can get the care that they need to live independently. And share any experiences of social care that you, your friends or your family have had or have heard about. This is a great opportunity to make your voice heard!

Taking the time to meet your MS can really make a difference. MSs want to make sure they are representing people like you who live in their constituency. By sharing why social care matters to you, you can make it a local issue that matters to them.

We're more than happy to help you prepare for this meeting and answer any questions you have. You can request a call with us by emailing campaigning@leonardcheshire.org



Read our four key steps to meeting your MS

1. Set up a meeting with your MS

MSs will usually only meet with their own constituents. Find out who your MS is by entering your postcode on this website: senedd.wales/find-a-member-of-the-senedd/. This will tell you who your MS is and provides their constituency office contact information. Some MSs will call meetings with their constituents 'surgeries', so watch out for that term.

Now, it's time to set up the meeting. Call or write to your MS's office, letting them know that you'd like to meet your MS and what you'd like to discuss. Tell the MS's office if you'd like the meeting to take place in person, or if you'd prefer to speak to them using a phone or video call. Make sure you let them know that you're a constituent, and find out how long your meeting will be, so you can plan accordingly. You can also let the MS's office know if you have any accessibility requirements when you get in touch. Once the meeting is set up, let us know the date and if you'd like any further support ahead of the meeting.

2. Prepare yourself for the meeting

Plan how you'd like to tell your MS that social care for disabled people matters to you. You might find it helpful to make some notes about the most important things you want to say to your MS, and any examples or experiences you want to share. This can be really helpful to guide you at the meeting and ensure you don't forget any points.

It's worth doing some research on your MS before you meet them. One thing you can do is look at if your MS has shown an interest in social care before. You might find this information on their website, or by searching their speeches in parliament at record.senedd.wales/search. If you feel like your MS has done a good job speaking about social care, make sure you let them know – everyone loves positive feedback! You can also find out what your MS's roles and responsibilities are. This will be on your MS's own website, or on senedd.wales/how-we-work/about-members-of-the-senedd/.

Once you know what you want to say, take some time to practise. It's normal to be a little nervous meeting your MS for the first time. To help with nerves, you could practise what you're going to say with someone else. Remember to keep it brief and clear, but don't be afraid to show your feelings. If you'd like to practise what you'd like to say with us, do get in touch.



Key points to raise

Don't forget that your MS is there to represent you, so they will be interested in your ideas and your experiences – that's the most important thing to share. Here are a few suggestions of some key points you could raise:

- Social care is a vital public service, which enables people to live as independently as they choose. Many disabled people rely on care and support for help with everyday tasks, like washing, dressing, and eating and to be able to access their community. Social care also plays a key role in supporting people getting into, or staying in, work, learning, and volunteering.
- 75,741 adults aged 18+ were in receipt of life-changing social care in Wales in 2019.¹
- Many disabled people cannot access the support they need to live as they choose. This is because of low funding and increased demand for social care. It is estimated that 500,000 adults aged 18+ will have a limited long-term illness in Wales by 2035, and 312,000 adults aged 65 and over will be unable to manage at least one self-care activity on their own.² The system must also build in greater choice and personalisation of care.
- Direct payments are an effective way to empower disabled people in deciding how their care needs can be met. However, in the financial year 2018-2019, only 8.3% of disabled people receiving social care in Wales used direct payments.³

- Reforms to social care must urgently be brought forward. The needs of working-age disabled adults must be at the heart of any long-term plan for social care. To achieve this, the government must develop the plan in partnership with disabled people to understand their views and needs.
- To make sure people can access the support that they need now, the government must immediately invest in social care.

3. Meeting your MS

Here are some top tips to remember when you're meeting your MS:

- **Share your experience:** MSs want to hear from their constituents. Telling them your story is a great way to show what social care means to you. Focus on your experiences, the experiences of your friends and family, or the stories you have read about social care for disabled people. This will make the issues feel real to the MS and get them involved.
- **Thank your MS:** MSs aren't often thanked for their work and are often incredibly busy. They will really appreciate you taking the time to thank them for meeting you, and you can use this as a chance to show off your research and thank them for actions they have taken in the past.

¹ Social Care Wales. 2019. <http://www.socialcaredata.wales/IAS/themes/demandforcareandsupportservices/adults/tabular?viewId=2212&geoid=1&subsetId=>

² Social Care Wales. 2019. Link: <http://www.socialcaredata.wales/IAS/themes/demandforcareandsupportservices/adults/tabular?viewId=2212&geoid=1&subsetId=>

³ Social Care Data Wales – 2018-2019. Link: <http://www.socialcaredata.wales/IAS/themes/adults/adultsreceivingcareandsupport/tabular?viewId=2212&geoid=1&subsetId=>

Stats Wales. Social Services – Adult Services. Link: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Adult-Services/Service-Provision/adultsreceivingsservices-by-localauthority-agegroup>

- **Be ready for a discussion:** MSs may disagree with what you ask them to do and may have arguments against what you're suggesting. Keep calm, and make sure you've prepared to respond to what they might suggest. If you're not sure what to say, let your MS know you'll get back to them – it's a good reason to follow up with them after the meeting.

Have a clear ask: MSs are often very busy and are keen to know what specific action they can take to address your concerns. If you're not sure what to request, we suggest asking your MS to call on the Welsh Government to put disabled people at the heart of social care reforms, and to promote the existence of direct payments. They can do this through writing to the government or asking a question in parliament. Your MS could also raise awareness about social care for disabled people, by publishing articles or press releases.



4. Following up after the meeting

Well done! By meeting your MS, you've helped put good social care for disabled people on the agenda. This is a really big achievement, and the first thing you should do is recognise how well you've done.

Send your MS a follow up message after the meeting, thanking them for their time and sharing any further thoughts or information. If your MS agreed to do something, you can also use this chance to remind them and ask them to let you know once they've done it.

Please let us know how the meeting went, and if your MS agreed to take any actions. You might also want to share your thoughts on social media about how the meeting went and encourage other people to meet their MSs to discuss social care – make sure to share this guide with them! If you're posting online, use **#CareForEquality** and tag us on Twitter **@LclImpact**.

Contact

If you need further information, we're more than happy to help. If you have met with your MS, we'd also love to know how you got on and if they agreed to speak out on social care.

For further information, or to let us know how you get on, please email campaigning@leonardcheshire.org

Care for Equality

Voice your support for urgent social care reform, to ensure equality for all. For more information about the **#CareForEquality** campaign and how to get involved please visit leonardcheshire.org

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