



The Powys Pledge

Valuing the Domiciliary Care Workforce

Introduction

This briefing provides an update on the Powys Pledge for Domiciliary Care. It is worth noting that a similar Powys Pledge is being developed for care home provision and some details can be found [HERE](#).

Background

Commissioning domiciliary care in rural Powys, the UK's second most sparsely populated county, has always been challenging. Ten years of receiving the worst financial settlement from the Welsh Government from 2010 to 2020 led to unique financial pressures and difficult commissioning decisions, while the changing demographics of Powys add to the complexity. Between 2019 and 2039 the number of older people in Powys is expected to increase from 17,600 to 28,200, while the working age population is expected to reduce from 73,500 to 56,900 over the same period (a reduction of approximately 850 people of working age annually). This suggests a potentially serious long term care staff shortage.

Work began in 2018 to develop a domiciliary care 'plan on a page' strategy (2019 version in Appendix I and 2021 version in Appendix II), considering reducing demand, meeting demand and increasing capacity. A domiciliary care market position statement demonstrated the ongoing challenges and the increasing recruitment and retention issues. It was also recognised that the fees paid to care providers in Powys were among the lowest in Wales, with potential care staff being enticed to work in less demanding roles for more money and better terms and conditions.

Finally, it was recognised that domiciliary care staff are, as stated by the Adult Social Care Portfolio Holder in Cabinet (Councillor Myfanwy Alexander), superheroes, but that not all superheroes wear capes. Working in difficult circumstances, providing the most important role within society, but often for low

salaries and poor terms and conditions. The domiciliary care staff in Powys are mostly female and this contributes to an imbalance of pay between genders. There were also concerns about the availability of Welsh speaking care staff across the county.

The Voice of Care Workers

The usual voice of care agencies requesting fee uplifts was overtaken in Powys during 2019/20 by citizens and carers representatives at the Powys Regional Partnership Board. One individual was so keen to influence change that she decided to apply for a care job with a domiciliary care agency and learnt through normative experience about the challenges care staff faced. She advised of examples where care staff were required to pay for their own uniforms; pay for their own DBS checks; not paid for mileage and sick days; and where there were instances of care staff having to travel in their own time from home (therefore not receiving mileage) to provide 30 minutes of care (i.e., 90 minutes away from home for 30 minutes paid work). It is worth noting that Powys County Council ended the practice of 15-minute calls in 2017.

The citizen and carers representatives on the Powys Regional Partnership Board became critical friends, providing constructive challenge to Council officers and commissioning strategies.

Consideration of New Fee Rates

Having adopted a Dynamic Purchasing System for the procurement of domiciliary care, different providers had already agreed fee rates. Trying to avoid a 'race to the bottom' was challenging, as well as ensuring that care was available in rural areas as well as the more populous urban areas.

The UKHCA (United Kingdom Home Care Association) calculate a fair fee for care provision and publish this annually. Powys' fee rates were, on average, more than £5 under the recommended rate by the UKHCA. Having considered this calculation and the fee rates provided, it was decided to develop the Powys Pledge.

Council Cabinet Agreement

The discussion at the Council's Cabinet was honest and frank. Any real changes would cost money and it was money that currently was not available to social services. However, ensuring fair fee rates was described as a cornerstone of the longer-term strategy for domiciliary care sustainability in Powys.

Cabinet members were keen to ensure that adopting higher fee rates would result in the care staff themselves benefiting and that employee terms and conditions were improved.

Powys County Council sees the value of the 'Powys Pound' and that the Council's money should be spent, where possible, in Powys for the benefit of the people of Powys, with that money circulating through the Powys and Welsh economy.

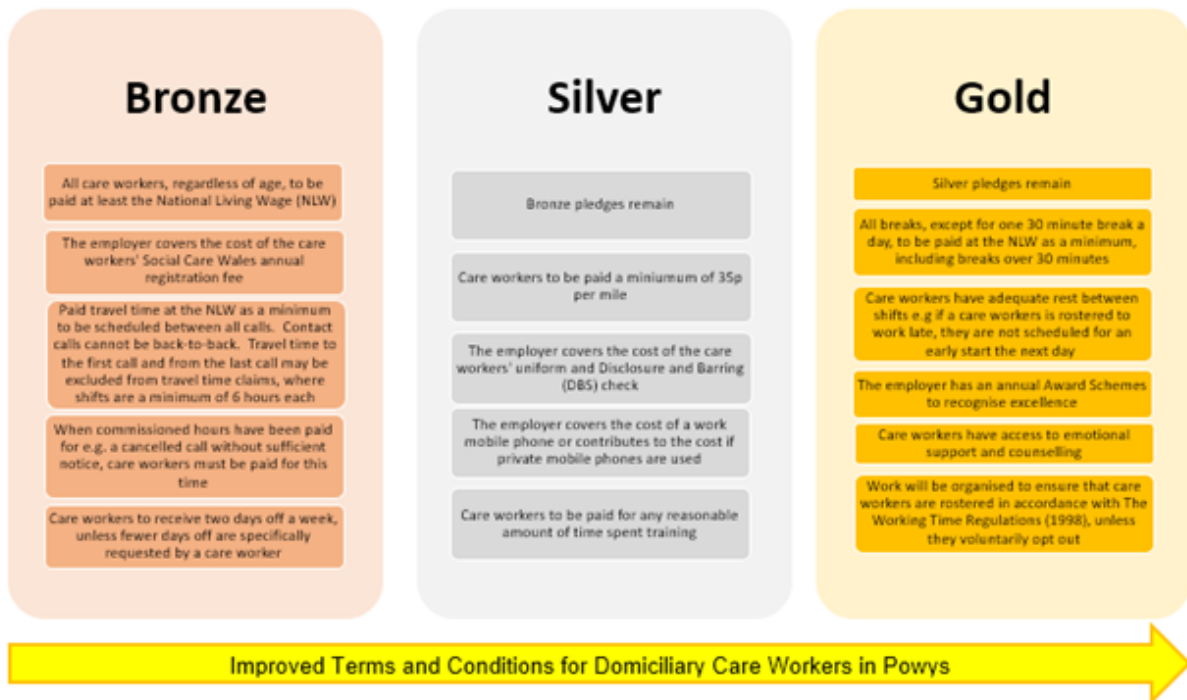
Following a period of consideration of wider budgetary implications, the Cabinet report was supported and approved unanimously in December 2020.

The Powys Pledge

1. We aim to pay all domiciliary care providers the UKHCA recommended hourly rate. We will increase fees annually (details follow) up to the UKHCA recommended rate.
2. All Domiciliary Care Providers to receive an uplift of 74p for inflation etc. (per hour) from 1st April 2021. This amount reflects the increase in the UKHCA recommended rate.
3. If Domiciliary Care Providers achieve the Bronze standard in the pledge, then the uplift is £1.50 per hour as of 1st April 2021. The maximum rate for providers to be the UKHCA recommended rate.
4. The same will be true for 2022 (silver standard) and 2023 (gold standard). There is also a draft platinum standard, but this will require further discussions with the providers and is aspirational for 2024. It includes paying staff the Real Living Wage.
5. The minimum fee has increased to £17 per hour resulting in some providers who previously bid via the Dynamic Purchasing System at low rates (some received £15 per hour) receiving a significant uplift in April 2021.

The aim, over time, is to achieve the UKHCA rate for all providers to ensure the best standards and terms and conditions to the care staff.

THE POWYS PLEDGE – VALUING THE DOMICILIARY CARE WORKFORCE



Aspirational Benefits

It is recognised that this is a medium/long term strategy. Many will read the standards within the Powys Pledge and express disappointment at the requirements.

However, it is important that the Council is enabled to manage the fiscal position appropriately and that providers can meet the Powys Pledge standards. As at the 1st April 2021 all providers have reached the Bronze standard and are receiving the full uplift. However, achieving the bronze standard was not easy for some providers.

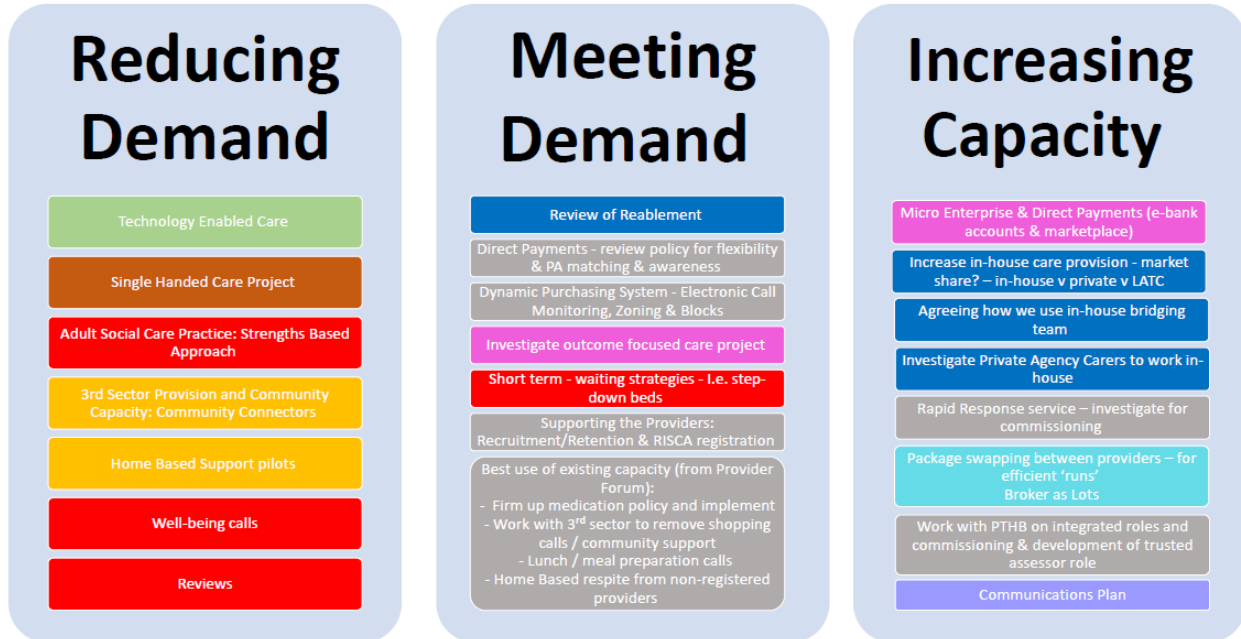
The hope is that all care staff in Powys will, over time, receive pay that reflects the value of their labour and that their working terms and conditions are enhanced. Recruitment will enable growth in the number of Welsh speakers applying for caring roles, and reduce the gender pay imbalance.

The benefits will be for the Powys population, the Powys economy, Powys social care service users, Powys care staff, Powys care agencies, and Powys County Council. That is the Powys Pledge.

Appendix I

Care and Support at Home in Powys – Plan on a Page 2019-21

CARE AND SUPPORT AT HOME IN POWYS - PLAN ON A PAGE JUNE 2019
Outcome - People can access care and support at home when required



Maintaining day to day operations within budget

CES & TEC Commissioning Manager	Occupational Therapy Service	Senior Manager Older People & Senior Manager Mental Health & Disabilities	Health and Care Change Manager - Live Well
Senior Manager – Social Care Delivery	Strategic Commissioning Manager – Promoting Independence	Health and Care Change Manager – Age Well	Brokerage Manager
Domiciliary Care Project Support & Communications and Engagement Officer			

Appendix II

Care and Support at Home in Powys – Plan on a Page 2021-22

