



UNISON Cymru/Wales Manifesto 2016

For the public services we need

Public services are the bedrock of our communities: your local hospital, your local council services, your local school, college and police.

The Welsh Assembly Elections are on 5 May 2016.

Use your vote to defend your public services.

This easy-to-read guide shows what UNISON Cymru Wales is campaigning for at the Welsh Elections. You can do your bit too; read it and tell your friends and colleagues to read it too. Together we can challenge the candidates in every Assembly seat to invest in the strong public services we need. Investment in these services will help tackle poverty and inequality and make Wales a fairer place to live.

WELL FUNDED PUBLIC SERVICES

Quality public services are adequately funded, accessible to all, efficient and democratically accountable. Public services should be retained within the public sector and provided by directly employed public sector staff. We do not support the outsourcing of any public-provided services to private companies or to third sector, co-operative or mutual providers.

Where services are already outsourced we seek an appropriate procurement process demonstrating that staff are paid the Living Wage and have decent terms and conditions negotiated through a recognised trade union.

We know the UK Conservative government is recklessly slashing spending because it doesn't believe in the public sector but a Welsh Government must work as hard as it possibly can to protect our services.

A FAIRLY PAID, FAIRLY TREATED

WORKFORCE

What's the greatest asset of our public sector? Its staff. Effective public services demand a well-trained, committed and decently rewarded workforce.

- Fair wages for all with a minimum rate of £8.25 per hour regardless of age (the Living Wage Foundation endorsed figure based upon living costs. This is significantly higher than the National Minimum Wage of £6.70 per hour and the UK Chancellor's 'national living wage' of £7.20 per hour effective April 2016). There is an obligation on the Welsh Government to lift people out of poverty.

More must be done to help women in the workplace including equality-proofed pay systems and equality considerations to be written into all public procurement contracts.

- Unpaid leave for grandparents.
- Bereavement leave and paid adjustment leave in time of family crisis.
- Employers to advertise all jobs on a flexible basis.

The ability of trade unions to champion these progressive causes will be harmed by the UK government's proposed Trade Union Bill. This would damage existing good industrial relations and should have no place in Wales.

The Welsh Government must prioritise the protection and support of staff working across the public sector including a commitment to avoid compulsory redundancy and unilateral changes to terms and conditions.

In health and social care, local government, education and our other sectors, we want world class public services that Wales can be proud of.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

We seek a renewed commitment from the Welsh Government to oppose privatisation in any form.

- Enforcement of the Ethical Care Charter across NHS and care sectors which places the needs of care users, dignity of patients and investment in the care workforce above profit-making considerations.
- Integration of health and social care and an end to the two-tier workforce raising the generally inferior social care employment conditions.
- Safe minimum staffing levels extended to all staff groups in all settings.
- Adequate protections for care whistle-blowers and the confidence that their concerns will be acted upon.
- Provision of the same professional support to care workers that other professional grades receive, including formal registration paid for by the Welsh Government.
- Urgent review of Child Protection Risk Register to decide the most beneficial system for the child and the social worker.
- Working with Welsh Government to develop seven-day services where there is a clinical need to ensure this is fully funded, sufficiently staffed, and terms and conditions protected.
- More outcomes-based targets across emergency services.
- Action to reduce agency costs by filling vacancies and bringing down sickness absence in the short-term and greater use of existing staff on enhanced rates; capping of agency fees.
- Equal status for mental health services with other health and community services; including, for example, properly staffed and supported dementia care services in accordance with the need of the population.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

If Welsh public services are to survive another five years of a UK Conservative government, the Welsh Government must receive adequate funds and should continue to call for a review of Welsh funding from Westminster.

Council services provision

- Public services are best provided in-house by employees who are paid appropriately and trained well.
- We reject outsourcing in any form. Outsourcing means contracts go to providers who promise to do the job most cheaply, not those who can do it best.
- We reject provision of services via a co-operative or mutual as a 'least worst' option when in effect this means a step towards eventual privatisation.
- All forms of outsourcing undermine democratic control and accountability to the local community.
- Where services are procured by the public sector the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in public sector service contracts must be applied to guarantee consistent employment conditions for all staff. These services must then be subject to a thorough, robust, and ongoing monitoring to ensure the Code is consistently applied. In addition, new tough public procurement rules should be introduced stipulating high employment standards including trade union recognition.

Re-organisation

Local Government re-organisation should only be progressed if the following principles are met:

- Clear evidence of benefit financially and to service provision.
- Adherence to Health Board boundaries to facilitate health and social care integration.
- Restructuring costs centrally funded.
- Overseeing role for Public Service Staff Commission to ensure fair treatment and no detriment for staff.

In addition large cost savings could be realised from the merging of the eight Local Government Pension Scheme Funds (note - this is not a condition just an opportunity that should be realised).

DECENT HOMES FOR ALL

Increase investment in social housing, including a council house building programme, for the regeneration of our communities.

POLICING IN OUR OWN HANDS

Control of our police force should be devolved to the Welsh Government. In particular, the vital contribution of Police Community Support Officers should be recognised with funding for these public sector workers maintained and protected.

A COMPASSIONATE WALES

A caring response to the refugee crisis means Wales receiving more refugees seeking asylum.

EDUCATION

We seek a renewed commitment from Welsh Government to oppose academies and free schools.

- Local authority control of schools and a free education system funded by general taxation and resist the marketisation of Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE).
- Continuation of the Foundation Phase and Flying Start Programme for 3-7 year olds which has supported families in disadvantaged areas.
- Review of the Welsh national structure for school staff to ensure greater consistency of roles and levels across Wales as well as higher professional standards.
- Revised guidance on how medicine and administering of personal care are provided.
- Develop a national framework for training, career development, and qualifications for all members of staff across FE and HE sectors.
- Develop a Wales FE policy that recognises and supports its distinct role within the education sector and ensures its parity with schools and HE institutions.
- There is no place for the profit motive within the education sector. Apprenticeships and workplace learning funded by the public purse should be delivered by FE, reinvesting money otherwise siphoned off as profit.
- Equality monitoring of FE staff profile and pay and grading to promote diversity and opportunity for all.
- Retention of the Education Maintenance Allowance.
- Protecting and extending access to Further and Higher Education for working class people must be a priority for any government that wants to tackle poverty and the low skill base in Wales.

- Part-time or flexible study allows many adults to return to learning though they often face a lack of co-operation from their employer. Welsh Government should provide incentives to ensure part-time study and lifelong learning are available to all and commit to genuine equality between full and part-time study.
- Guaranteed funding for the Wales Union Learning Fund.

ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The Welsh Government must adopt a radical approach that involves local authorities and their vital role in recycling and encouraging energy efficiency.

CONNECTED WALES

Improving Wi-Fi access particularly in rural and deprived areas is a priority and Wi-Fi and digital support should be provided in libraries and community centres.

For more sector policy detail UNISON Cymru Wales has also produced special mini manifestos for Health, Local Government and Education. To obtain copies or further copies of this UNISON general manifesto please contact a.gittins@unison.co.uk