# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Rebalancing Care and Support** |
| **DATE**  | **19 March 2024** |
| **BY** | **Julie Morgan MS, Deputy Minister for Social Services** |

In November 2023, I informed Members, in an [oral statement](https://www.gov.wales/oral-statement-outcome-rebalancing-care-and-support-consultation) about the outcome of the Rebalancing Care and Support programme consultation. I published a [written statement](https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-national-care-service-initial-implementation-plan-publication) in December 2023 setting out the initial implementation plan for our vision for a National Care Service in Wales.

Today, I am providing a further update about the progress of the Rebalancing Care and Support programme as we move towards implementation. This is an ambitious programme, which will establish the key building blocks required to achieve our shared commitment within the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru, of a longer-term vision of creating a National Care Service and forms a significant element of the first stage of the [Initial Implementation Plan](https://www.gov.wales/towards-national-care-and-support-service-initial-implementation-plan).

There will be three main areas of focus for the rebalancing programme.

The National Framework for the Commissioning of Care and Support is the legislative framework. It will be established through a statutory code of practice, which will apply to the commissioning of care and support services by health boards, NHS trusts, and local authorities. The national framework has been co-produced by members of a national technical group and revised and strengthened using the feedback received through the consultation. It will set the principles and standards for commissioning practice and reduce complexity. The draft code will shortly be laid before the Senedd, and come into force in September.

To support commissioners to deliver the principles and standards set out in the code, we will put in place a digital toolkit of good practice. The National Office for Care and Support will lead on this work during its first year.

The National Office is another important part of our programme. Many of the respondents to the consultation welcomed the National Office, saying it would strengthen social care and provide it with the voice it needs at a national level. The constructive feedback we also received has helped to refine its development.

The National Office for Care and Support will be established from April 2024 with an initial focus on three core areas in addition to taking an outward facing, collaborative approach.:

* Supporting the Chief Social Care Officer for Wales
* The development, implementation, and ongoing delivery of the National Care Service for Wales
* Implementation and ongoing management of the National Framework.

The core value statement of the National Office will be: “To provide a central guiding hand to the sector through driving improvement in the national delivery of social care in Wales to achieve collaboration, better and more equitable outcomes, access, and service-user experience”.

The third area of focus is on strengthening partnership working and the integration of services by revising the Part 2 Code of Practice on the general social care functions of local authorities, and by amending the regulations and statutory guidance on partnership arrangements.

The revisions to the Part 2 Code have focused primarily on clarifying the duty on local authorities to promote social enterprises, co-operatives, user-led services and the third sector – and on the importance of citizen engagement, voice and co-production in the design and delivery of care and support.

The new Part 2 Code will be laid alongside the National Framework and will come into force on the same date.

We will also shortly be publishing for consultation a set of amendments to the Partnership Arrangements (Wales) Regulations, aimed at strengthening the role and functions of the Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs).

This includes broadening the RPBs’ objectives and extending their membership; ensuring their citizen, unpaid carer and third sector members are better supported; and clarifying planning and reporting arrangements. The overall aim is to hard wire existing best practice into the legislative framework, under which regional partnerships work, and to ensure that the regulations and guidance fully reflect the way in which the RPBs have developed and matured since they were set up in 2016.

In drawing up these draft regulations, we were greatly helped by the wide-ranging feedback from the Rebalancing Care and Support consultation.

We intend to bring forward regulations and updated statutory guidance in the autumn term, with a coming into force date of 31 December.