



BRIEFING 4: Supporting Digital Transformation and Innovation in Social Care

The Ask: Support digital transformation and innovation across social care in Wales. The sector needs access to the most effective technologies. We must invest in digital transformation to equip social care with modern, interoperable systems underpinned by ethical innovation. By harnessing data and AI, we can empower the workforce to deliver more effective, accessible support.

Digital Transformation is Already Changing Social Care in Wales

Something significant is happening in social care in Wales right now. Social workers are producing better assessments in less time. Care home staff are spending more hours with residents and less time searching for paperwork. Practitioners who were cautious about artificial intelligence (AI) twelve months ago describe it as something they would not want to work without. Digital transformation in Welsh social care is no longer a future ambition — it is an emerging reality and the evidence of its impact is compelling.

ADSS Cymru has led two major digital programmes across the Welsh social care sector in the past two years, generating some of the most robust practitioner evidence of digital impact in the UK. This briefing sets out what is already working, what the opportunity looks like at scale, and what we are asking the new Senedd to help us deliver.

What the Evidence Shows

A Wales-wide review of AI-assisted tools — working within the Microsoft 365 environment already used across Welsh local government — involved all 22 local authorities and produced striking results. An initial readiness review in 2025 found that 69 per cent of practitioners expressed positive attitudes toward AI tools. The follow-up review published in March 2026 found that most authorities have now moved from pilots to active, ongoing use. Practitioners are creating first drafts of assessments, care plans and court documents, summarising complex case files, managing correspondence and supporting mental capacity work.

The impact data is remarkable. 86 per cent of practitioners reported improvements in the quality of their written work. 75 per cent felt more positive about their role. More than half reported improved wellbeing. A third were saving more than seven hours per month on administration — hours returned directly to the people they support. Consistently, practitioners describe more time for direct engagement with service users as the most important benefit of all.

In residential care, ADSS Cymru and the WLGA piloted the PredicAire digital care management system in local authority care homes in the Gwent region. Moving from paper-based to integrated digital systems allows care workers to record at the point of care, gives managers a real-time picture of the

BRIEFING 4: Supporting Digital Transformation and Innovation in Social Care

home and enables faster communication with families and health professionals. Early adopters were unanimous: the technology gives them more time with residents, and they would not go back.

These programmes sit alongside a growing range of AI tools transforming practice across Wales. AI scribe tools such as Magic Notes — already in use by social care teams across a number of local authorities, including Powys — listen to care conversations and automatically produce structured documentation, freeing practitioner time. Sgript, developed specifically for the Welsh social care sector, provides digital resource for practitioners working through the medium of Welsh. Together, these tools point toward a sector that is genuinely, practically changing the way it works — and demonstrating that technology, when implemented well, strengthens rather than replaces the human core of care.

The Opportunity at Scale

The evidence from these programmes points to a transformation that is possible across all of Welsh social care — but which is currently uneven. Most authorities have moved forward but pace and depth varies considerably. Local authorities with dedicated digital leads and clear governance are significantly further ahead than those without and the risk of a two-tier system is real. Work on Connecting Care and related initiatives has already demonstrated that the sector can support collaborative delivery at local, regional and national level — but progress risks remaining fragmented and unable to achieve the scale required without a clearer national coordinating mechanism and sustained investment to move beyond pilots into consistent implementation. This potential is reinforced by ADSS Cymru's Copilot readiness work, which found that practitioners move quickly from caution to enthusiasm once they have practical exposure and support — confirming that the appetite to adopt these tools at scale, and to capitalise on the full power of mainstream platforms such as Copilot, already exists across the workforce.

If the tools and approaches already working in parts of Wales were available consistently across all 22 authorities — supported by shared infrastructure, national guidance and properly funded workforce development — the cumulative impact would be substantial. Thousands of hours of practitioner time returned to direct care. Improved quality and consistency of assessments, care plans and court documents. Better-informed decisions. A workforce that feels valued, supported and equipped for modern practice. Ultimately, better outcomes for the people of Wales who depend on social care. This is not a speculative ambition. It is a reasonable projection from evidence that already exists.

People, Culture and Workforce Readiness

Digital transformation in social care is not primarily a technology challenge. It is a people and culture challenge. The evidence from both the AI readiness work and the PredicAire pilot points to the same conclusion: when practitioners have the opportunity to see a technology in action, engage with it practically and receive adequate training and ongoing support, the majority embrace change positively and quickly. The Copilot readiness review found that while only 39 per cent were familiar with AI tools at the outset, following practical focus group sessions more than 85 per cent said they would like to make a start or learn more — a rapid and significant shift.

What holds people back is not resistance to technology but a lack of familiarity, confidence and sector-specific training that connects tools to the realities of daily work. Equipping the workforce requires a sustained, practical approach: face-to-face training tailored to different roles, peer support networks, visible leadership from senior managers, and ongoing refresher provision built in as standard. The evidence is clear that the technology is intended to support practitioners, not to replace the professional judgement and human connection that are the irreplaceable core of social care.

BRIEFING 4: Supporting Digital Transformation and Innovation in Social Care

Making Transformation Equitable: Welsh Language and Digital Inclusion

Digital transformation must work for everyone. Current AI tools do not yet produce reliable transcription or generation in Welsh, creating a real risk that Welsh-speaking service users and practitioners are disadvantaged by the very tools designed to support them. One authority has developed a workable interim approach, routing AI outputs through its Welsh language team but this must not remain a local workaround. ADSS Cymru is committed to pressing Welsh Government and technology providers to treat Welsh language AI capability as a priority, not an afterthought, and to ensure that digital transformation is consistent with Welsh Government's own commitments to the language.

Digital inclusion is equally important. Transformation must not widen existing inequalities. Older people, those in rural communities and people with limited digital experience must not find that a digitised social care system is harder to access. Accessible alternatives and people-centred design must be principles embedded from the outset in every implementation.

National Governance and the AI Commission for Wales

The pace of AI adoption across Welsh social care is outrunning the national governance frameworks designed to support it. Local authorities are currently developing AI policies, data governance frameworks and legal compliance approaches in isolation — duplicating effort, creating inconsistency and exposing practitioners and service users to unnecessary risk. This is not sustainable.

Welsh Government, working through the AI Commission for Wales, must provide national leadership on ethical frameworks, legal guidance and data standards for AI in social care. ADSS Cymru wants to see innovation accelerated, not stifled but it must be innovation with confidence, on a sound legal and ethical footing. A national AI champions network and a shared evidence hub for social care would significantly accelerate the sector's ability to learn and move forward together, rather than every local authority solving the same problems independently. There is also a specific and immediate risk that needs naming: current policy attention and investment remain weighted more heavily towards digital transformation in health, with limited explicit focus on the distinct needs of social care. Without a clear national mechanism for social care digital, there is a genuine danger that social care is treated as secondary to health-led approaches, despite the central role it plays in prevention, wellbeing and community-based support. Digital in Social Care (DiSC) Cymru — the sector-led national partnership bringing together all 22 local authorities, WLGA, ADSS Cymru, Social Care Wales and delivery partners — is the existing, trusted mechanism through which this risk can be mitigated. Formally recognising DiSC Cymru as the principal national vehicle for social care digital transformation and embedding it within the National Office for Care and Support and wider reform structures, would give social care digital the national standing and coordination it needs.

Working With the New Senedd

The digital transformation of Welsh social care is underway and it is producing results. What it needs now is the sustained investment, national leadership and policy environment to move from promising programmes in parts of Wales to consistent, high-quality digital practice across the whole sector.

ADSS Cymru is looking for an active working relationship with the Welsh Government and with Senedd Members across all political groups to drive that progress. Specifically, we are asking for: formal recognition of DiSC Cymru as the national social care digital partnership and the principal route for collective sector engagement on digital and data transformation; sustained multi-year investment rather than one-off project funding, moving away from the short-term grant dependency that prevents planning, retention and scaling; the commissioning of a five to ten year digital and data strategy for

BRIEFING 4: Supporting Digital Transformation and Innovation in Social Care

social care, led through DiSC Cymru and aligned with wider national reform priorities; integration of DiSC Cymru within National Office planning and wider social care reform arrangements so that digital transformation is built into mainstream system reform, not treated as a separate track; national governance through the AI Commission for Wales on ethical frameworks and data standards; and meaningful engagement with technology providers on Welsh language AI capability. The technology is proven. The practitioner evidence is compelling. The appetite across the workforce is real. The Seventh Senedd has the opportunity to be the one that finally unlocks the full potential of digital social care in Wales and ADSS Cymru is ready to help make that happen.

Key Sources

ADSS Cymru / WLGA. Assessing the Digital and Workforce Readiness of Local Authorities to Implement AI Tools in Adult Social Care in Wales. March 2025.

ADSS Cymru / WLGA. The Implementation of AI Tools in Social Care in Welsh Local Authorities: A Review of Learning and Progress. March 2026.

ADSS Cymru / WLGA. Piloting of PredicAire in Residential Care (Gwent Region): Shared Learning for Digital Transformation. March 2025.

DiSC Cymru Framework. Brilliant Basics Pillar. disc.cymru/en/framework/brilliant-basics/

Senedd Research, Can NHS Wales go digital? Key Issues for the Seventh Senedd. May 2026.

Social Care Wales, Supporting Digital in Social Care – The Insight Collective.

Welsh Government. Digital and Data Strategy for Health and Social Care in Wales. 2023.

ADSS Cymru is the Association of Directors of Social Services in Wales, the professional leadership body for directors and senior managers of social services in all 22 Welsh local authorities.

For further information:

ADSS Cymru Business Unit, Ty Antur, Navigation Park, Abercynon, CF45 4SN