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President
ADSS Cymru
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Dear Mr Jones,

I am urgently getting in touch to discuss the All Wales Pledge that ADSS Cymru announced last week, aiming to regulate social work recruitment agencies and agency workers. We wanted to take this opportunity to share feedback on the proposals, provide reflections on the contribution made by agencies and agency workers to the sector, and offer our support to develop a stable and robust workforce.

By way of introduction, [the Recruitment & Employment Confederation \(REC\)](#) is the voice of the UK recruitment industry, speaking up for great recruiters. We have over 3,000 businesses in our membership, all of whom commit to our robust compliance standards. The category of health, social care and social work is the biggest sector at the REC, with almost 500 members. Our members provide clinical and non-clinical professionals to local authorities, care providers and NHS Trusts as well as to the private sector, supplying valuable permanent and flexible workers across all bands and services. Our members include some of the largest suppliers of social work staffing, as well as hundreds of SMEs.

Temporary agency workers provide vital support to so many families and communities, and keep the economy going day and night. The role of this workforce is especially important in social care and the NHS. Looking at the data for children's residential care in Wales in 2021, we can see that more than 30% of people working in local authority-run services were on a temporary contract. In any staffing model, the most important thing for an employer and service provider to achieve is balance, and an over-reliance on contingent staffing is not a sustainable, long-term model. But locums will always have a role to play as they plug staffing gaps in the event of seasonal peaks, emergencies and staff absences.

In addition, we need to recognise why those working via a temporary agency contract are choosing to do so, especially in a tight labour market where 5,581 social care posts in Wales are vacant or 'held vacant'. Agencies often play a crucial role in retaining staff who would have otherwise left the profession completely. As several surveys of the sector have found, the biggest pull factor to agency working is flexibility; followed by rate of pay. In fact, when agency social workers are asked what they would do if the only work available to them was via a permanent contract, many suggest to us they would retire or leave the sector entirely.

It is our experience that any changes to the use of agencies and temporary workers in the sector would be most effective with input from recruiters and agency workers. And as experts in long-term and strategic workforce planning, recruitment agencies are doing excellent work to support both workers and their local authorities.

Rather than introducing rushed plans, we would be keen to discuss with you how to navigate the current workforce challenges facing so many sectors right now. Our data about the labour market and labour shortages provides national and regional overviews of the agency workforce, and we are keen to offer these data as well as our expertise. The recruitment industry acts as a partner with the public sector to provide vital frontline services and maintain good standards of care.



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Within that context and spirit, we would welcome the opportunity to explore these important issues with you in more detail. Ellie Goddard (ellie.goddard@rec.uk.com) in my office will be happy to arrange a meeting at a mutually convenient time.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Shoesmith
Deputy Chief Executive