Thangam Debbonaire

MP Bristol West

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Care and Support West

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Dear Thangam

**The Social Care Funding Crisis**

This letter has gone to the Senior Officers in the local social and health care arena in your constituency in order to underline their Duty of Care to local citizens in relation to the delivery of Social Care. This letter will also go to the local social care lead Elected Member.

Care and Support West (C&SW) is, as you know, a membership organisation for owners and operators of adult social care services across the old County of Avon which as you know is now made up of four Unitary Authorities. We represent over 400 organisations across the four local authority areas.

This letter also comes at the point of the Government announcing their “Adult Social Care White Paper -- People at the Heart of Care” which states *“The care and support workforce are our biggest asset. Trusting relationships with carers provide the bedrock for outstanding social care. It is a relationship built over time, and one which gives people confidence that their care needs are well understood and will be consistently met …… There are a huge number of people across the country who provide support and care”.*

For clarity we believe if the government rhetoric of: “*The care and support workforce are our biggest asset”* is to be appropriately rewarded;

1. Fee rate increases to ensure continuity of care and recognise the extreme cost pressures will need to be >10% immediately to maintain status quo but see b) below for urgent ongoing work required to support the sector going forward.
2. A minimum of £15 per hour for care staff is essential to recruit and retain staff in the sector and ask that urgent co-productive work is initiated between providers and commissioners to achieve this.
3. Communication with providers about fee rates should be by the New Year to enable providers to plan the sustainability of their services.

**Preventing Social Care Sector Collapse**

Recently, the Social Care regulator, the Care Quality Commission has warned of “tsunami of unmet need”. Locally our members are saying that the staffing challenges are the greatest they have ever known, and several are considering seriously whether they have a future in the sector.

A [snap survey](https://adass.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=83b2aa68490f97e9418043993&id=1248731ed7&e=4078bee25d) of the state of social care services by ADASS has revealed a rapidly deteriorating picture of hundreds of thousands of older and disabled people left waiting for help despite record increases in care being provided to people in their own homes. Directors of social services across England are expressing unprecedented alarm at the findings as winter approaches. They say the government must act to stabilise the care system.

This reported by Care England: “**Care homes face £90-an-hour bill for agency nurses**
Care homes are being charged more than £90 an hour for agency nurses who are vaccinated as staff shortages reach critical levels across the country. The scarcity of nurses and carers has left care homes and hospitals scrapping over agency workers and even led to shift bookings being “gazumped”, just as a buyer would offer more money to beat a rival to a new home”.

**The Local Reality**

Our members run Care Homes, Nursing Homes, Home Care Agencies, LiveIn Care organisations, Day Services and Supported Living services. They include small to medium local businesses, as well as ‘not for profit’ and charity members. They provide services for people who pay for their own care as well as under contract to one of the four Councils, or local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). As well as the increasingly ageing population there is a significant rise in the complexity of people’s care needs. This includes a rising mental health epidemic with care providers being asked to support people with increasingly complex presentations.

As well as providing invaluable care and support services for local residents, the people employed by our members are invariable local residents themselves so live, work and spend their money locally. This makes them doubly valuable to the local community.

**Potential Solutions**

The complex range of work care staff undertake and care sector organisations deliver needs to be adequately funded if it is to be maintained and continue into the future. This will require an uplift for 2022/23 from local authority and CCG commissioners of between 10% and 15% just to achieve a care sector “stand still” position.

Whilst we welcome the recently announced planned April 1st 2022 rise in hourly rates for care workers from £8.91 to £9.50, we need to add that the funding available to pay for care from the local authority and CCG’s is insufficient for provider organisations to meet this rise. This, added to the planned rise in NI in April 2022 for both staff and employers creates an increasingly impossible challenge for care providers. Alongside this the significant and continuing rise in utility costs together with the failure over many decades of service commissioning fees to match the real cost of care placing many care organisations in a situation where sustainability is being questioned on a weekly and monthly basis.

As noted by CQC and ADASS services are starting to break down as home care providers are being forced to hand back care packages to the Council due to staff shortages and care homes are unable to accept new placements because of staff shortages.  We have become aware that Reablement services which support those being discharged from hospital are also under pressure as they are unable to move service users on to their appropriate long-term care due to insufficient resources, thus posing potential impact on hospital discharges. Self-funding service users are also beginning to turn to the Council for help as they are unable to recruit their own personal assistants.  We are concerned that before long frail vulnerable service users in will not be able to receive the care services they rely on to keep them safe.

Our members and their staff have worked tremendously hard during the pandemic. Some have had a horrendous time working on the frontline in care homes and seen too many residents die as they themselves struggled with inadequate PPE; frequently changing guidance and depleted staff rotas. At a time when most of the country was told to stay home and stay safe, home care and care home staff were out and about in their communities supporting the most vulnerable, but also placing themselves and their families at risk. For them to do all this at all is amazing, but to do it for less money than they could have earned in a supermarket is not only amazing but in reality, a situation which is unforgivable.

We have built positive relationships with Local Authority officers and believe that they do understand the pressures our members are working under. However, at best they control limited budgets, and we often end up just discussing how to spend the limited money ‘in the pot’. We are now writing to you to ask you to do what you can to ensure that there is more in the pot!

Whilst we welcome the money that Government put into supporting Social Care during the pandemic, and the recent workforce retention and recruitment fund, this is no substitute for ensuring that there is sufficient base funding in the sector.

We hope the information contained in this letter will inform your understanding that if action is not taken, more people in your constituency will be unable to access crucial care and further care homes and agencies providing home care will have no option but to close. We hope that you will feel able to support calls for better pay for care workers and for sustainable contract rates for their employers.

Yours Sincerely



David Smallacombe

CE Care and Support West

For and on behalf of the C&SW Board