

## Written evidence submitted by Carers Trust (WBR0014)

### Summary

- Domiciliary care providers worked well with local authorities whilst managing staff absences and stretched capacity during the pandemic
- Social Care and its workforce have felt less valued than their counterparts in the NHS
- There needs to be a People Plan for Social Care

### Full response

A number of Carers Trust Network Partners (local specialist carer support organisations) provide regulated domiciliary care. Carers Trust surveyed Network Partners between April and July 2020. Many Network Partners highlighted challenges around:

- Supporting staff and volunteers with their mental health
- Increase demand for services
- Recruitment
- Loss of staff and impact of having to furlough staff
- Difficulty accessing PPE and increased costs of purchasing PPE

Evidence from Carers Trust Network Partners echoes larger scale surveys and research into the wider health social care sector. An IPPR<sup>1</sup> report found that:

- One in two health and care workers across the UK feel their mental health has declined in the last eight weeks.
- 42 per cent of healthcare professions across the UK say the government has not done enough to support their mental health

### **Domiciliary care providers worked well with local authorities whilst managing staff absences and stretched capacity**

Before the Coronavirus crisis, experts were warning about the fragility of the social care market and the workforce vacancy rate of around 120,000. However, it seems that in response to the unprecedented challenges presented by Coronavirus, local authorities and providers responded positively.

The ADASS Budget 2020 survey found that:

- All local authorities whose Directors responded to the survey said they engaged directly with providers to understand the pressures they were facing

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ippr.org/files/2020-04/care-fit-for-carers-april20.pdf>

- 82% of Directors who responded to the ADASS survey engaged directly with all of their domiciliary and community care providers
- 79% of councils provided funding to domiciliary care providers to deal with increased workforce costs
- 61% gave additional temporary funding to domiciliary care providers
- 60% of councils agreed to fund temporary costs reported by both residential and domiciliary care providers

However, Directors of Adult Social Care are still worried about the future. The cooperation and partnership working that has occurred during the Coronavirus crisis should not detract from the urgency and importance of social care reform. The same ADASS Budget survey found:

- Planned savings for 2020/21 were £608m, equating to 3.9% of net adult social care budgets for 2020/21.
- In 2019/20 this reported requirement was £699m (4.7% of budget).
- Cumulatively savings since 2010 would have amounted to £8.3bn.
- However, the onset of Coronavirus is likely to severely diminish the ability of local authorities to deliver their savings programmes.
- Only 4% of Directors are fully confident that their budget will be sufficient to meet their statutory duties; this compares to 35% in 2019/20.
- 56% of Directors are partially confident in meeting their statutory duties in 2020/21.
- 35% of Directors have indicated that they have no confidence in their budgets being sufficient to meet all of their statutory duties
- For 2021/22, 76% of Directors have either partial confidence or no confidence that their budgets will be sufficient to meet all of their statutory duties, not a single Director indicated that they were fully confident.

### **Social Care and its workforce have felt less valued than their counterparts in the NHS**

ADASS's Budget 2020 report highlights that whilst NHS England wrote to all NHS settings on 17 March setting out the next steps in the NHS' response to Coronavirus, the Social Care Action Plan was not released until 16 April – one month later.

The delay in a plan for social care during the Coronavirus crisis compounds a feeling amongst many in the social care sector, that social care is not a priority. This was further compounded by policies such as rapid discharge which prioritised hospital capacity over the ability for care homes to care for all residents safely, or for home care agencies to put in place packages of support, backed up by well-informed unpaid carers.

### **Rapid discharge and its impact on the social care workforce and unpaid carers**

As mentioned above, the policy of rapid discharge was a clear prioritisation to protect hospital capacity over the capacity of providers of social care – be they care homes or domiciliary home care providers – and unpaid carers.

We know that NHS England and NHS Improvement are exploring what changes that occurred to health delivery as a result of the Coronavirus crisis have emerged as beneficial and may be implemented longer term. As we have also made clear to NHS England and NHS Improvement, rapid discharge without a thorough assessment of the person with care and support needs, and without support being put into place for their unpaid carers, is not a change that should be cemented.

The rapid discharge policy is also likely to have increased pressure on social care providers, and social care staff. The ADASS survey found that:

- Over half – 55% of local authorities experienced an increase in people presenting with needs when being discharged from hospital
- Only 55% of Directors either agreed or strongly agreed that people were discharged to the right place for them, with 22% neither agreeing nor disagreeing. This means that nearly a quarter (22%) of people discharged at this time were not discharged to the most appropriate setting to meet their needs.
- only 11% of Directors believe that every individual in their local authority area was discharged to the right place for them the first time to best meet their needs.

This increase in people presenting with needs when being discharged from hospital with many people not being discharged to the right setting will have put extra pressure on providers and staff – and likely would have contributed to staff burnout amongst social care staff.

### **There needs to be a People Plan for Social Care**

In late July, the NHS People's Plan<sup>2</sup> was released. The Plan sets out how the NHS will support employee wellbeing, how it will use employees' full range of skills and experience and how the NHS will recruit and retain staff.

Whilst welcome, there needs to be an equivalent for social care. Alongside the urgent reforms to funding that is needed to social care, action needs to be taken to ensure the widespread problems in recruitment and retention of care workers are addressed.

We know that many care workers risked their own health to carry out their duties. Social care workers were at the frontline of the response to the Coronavirus crisis. Like their counterparts in the NHS, they deserve to be recognised for their work during the pandemic.

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### **About Carers Trust**

Carers Trust is a major charity for, with and about carers. We work to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, unpaid, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/we-are-the-nhs-people-plan-for-2020-21-action-for-us-all/>

We do this with a UK wide network of quality assured independent partners and through the provision of grants to help carers get the extra help they need to live their own lives. With these locally based Network Partners we are able to support carers in their homes through the provision of replacement care, and\* in the community with information, advice, emotional support, hands on practical help and access to much needed breaks. We offer specialist services for carers of people of all ages and conditions and a range of individually tailored support and group activities.

Our vision is that unpaid carers count and can access the help they need to live their lives.

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**For more information, please contact Ramzi Suleiman, Policy and External Affairs Officer,**

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