

Written evidence submitted by Anchor (EPW0016)

£1 billion extra of funding every year for more social care staff and better infrastructure, technology and facilities

Anchor is clear that a long-term, funding settlement for social care, which aims to address the challenges providers face is the best way to secure the future of sector and the high-quality care options for our ageing population.

We are continuing to call on the government to couple system and funding reform with a wide-ranging initiative aimed at attracting the people social care needs into the sector through highlighting best practice and the opportunities for career progression and range of careers on offer.

Though we welcome the government's commitment of £500m towards workforce professionalisation in the social care white paper, it is vital that this money reaches the frontline and for long-term funding reform to help to address the issue of pay which is continuing to hold the sector back.

A 2021 survey of 2,000 social care services undertaken by the National Care Forum highlighted the urgency of this situation. The survey found that 74% of providers have experienced an increase in the number of staff leaving since April 2021 with 50% of those leaving highlighting stress as the main reason for their departure and 44% citing pay.

At Anchor, we are acutely aware of these challenges having experienced a number of experienced Care Home Managers leaving us due to pressure of the COVID-19 pandemic and concerns for the future.

These issues are long-standing, with an estimated 120,000 vacancies across social care pre-pandemic and a decline of 33% in the number of social care nurses since 2012/13.

Consistency across the regions is also key to addressing many of the problems social care faces in terms of workforce and other resources. There is currently a disparity – some quite significant – across what some local authorities pay in fees compared to others. We are calling for a consistent approach to address these disparities as part of a long-term funding settlement which reflects the cost of delivering care across the UK.

Restrictions to control the pandemic now lifted throughout most of society, and most economic sectors are now fully open. Social care is once again competing with the NHS and the wider economy, such as the hospitality sector, for the people with the right frame of mind and skills we need. We are calling for the government to help the sector to address this as a matter of urgency.

Listen to the views of social care staff to learn how we can better support them – individually and collectively

Anchor welcomes the recognition of the need for a social care workforce plan as part of the social care reform white paper. We believe that Anchor's own 2020 - 22 People Plan offers a framework which could be applied to the sector as a whole, with many similarities to the NHS' 2020/21 People Plan. These include:

- Designing new and effective means of learning and development to increase opportunities for career progression
- Developing our leadership capability
- Continue to enhance the means by which we support colleague wellbeing

- Drive higher colleague engagement

We are now calling for the government to produce this as a matter of urgency for the next NHS people plan to recognise the interdependency of the health and social care sectors.

Furthermore, we remain concerned that current plans for further integration between health and social care do not give providers a sufficient role in effecting the change our colleagues and service users need. The Integrated Care Systems (ICS) created new roles for the NHS and local authorities but not for care providers.

Social care has, for many years, been blighted by disparity with the health service and policy which fails to recognise the interdependency between the two sectors. Parity between health and care is key to any significant, long-term reform of the care sector, tackling the workforce challenges and to the future of the NHS. This cannot be achieved without a greater role for social care.

May 2022