

Written evidence submitted by the Papworth Trust (EPW0071)

About Papworth Trust

1. Papworth Trust is a disability charity and registered social housing provider, whose aim is for disabled people to have equality, choice and independence. Papworth Trust helps over 5,000 people every year through a wide range of services including housing, work and care.
2. Papworth Trust is contracted by Suffolk County Council to deliver c.4,000 hours of complex care to customers each week and our services are all rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission. The Trust has always been proud of the high level of care delivered, but we are now genuinely concerned about the sustainability of these services.
3. Papworth Trust believes that every disabled person should be able to live their life independently, with choice and control. Receiving the right level of care and support is a central component of achieving these outcomes. We want to see disabled people receive a high-quality service that is based on their need and where possible acts as a prevention against further deterioration in their health and subsequent admission into hospital care settings.
4. Social care reform is long overdue. The sector is at crisis point and has been for some time. Due to pressures and competition, the sector feels less likely to collaborate and share. We need an investment plan that addresses the long-term funding issue and provides our dedicated and hard-working workforce with the recognition and pay and conditions that reflect their role. Without these we have real concerns for the future sustainability of the sector.

Planning for the workforce

5. Nationally, the terms and conditions for people who work in the care sector do not in any way match the demands of the job and the responsibilities of their roles. On top of this the prolonged pandemic has placed relentless pressure on our workforce, who are exhausted. We are seeing the impact of this and staff are leaving in large numbers, resulting in the Trust facing an acute recruitment crisis, which is harder than it has ever been before. Staffing shortfalls remain persistent as it becomes increasingly more challenging to attract new recruits into the sector.
6. As an employer, Papworth Trust is currently a middle-rate payer within the social care sector and pay our staff above the minimum living wage. Earlier this year we took steps to further increase the pay of our workforce in a bid to enhance our ability to recruit good staff and retain our existing workforce. This was in addition to a number of other measures to try and improve recruitment and retention, including extensive marketing of vacancies and the introduction of a 'refer a friend scheme'. We raised the hourly rates we pay staff to per hour and introduced generous sick pay benefits. Whilst these measures have had some impact, we know this will only last for the short-term and constantly feel as though we are on the cliff-edge. Our ability to maintain pay rates above the living wage in the longer term is very fragile. Whilst the Trust has taken action – which in the short term is having a very real negative impact on our bottom line – we do not feel this has been matched by the Government with any positive action. The sector demanded a minimum of 11% increase in

funding for 2022 however we received 5.5% which exacerbates our negative financial situation significantly.

7. This is not an issue felt solely by Papworth Trust but is sector wide. According to Skills for Care, the care worker turnover rate in 2020/21 was 34.4%¹. Given this high turnover rate occurs nationally, we feel this demands a national response, as alone providers are not going to be able to bring about the change that is needed.
8. Where previously, we would have been able to turn to bank and agency staff to prop up any shortfalls, these are becoming increasingly difficult to source and utilising these options does not come without further issues. Increasing reliance on agency staff can lead to a lack of consistency in staff and support for the customer, which in turn can lead to an increase in challenging behaviours and/or hospitalisations. With the customer at the heart of this, we must ask the question; what does inconsistency of staff, or a change in their ratios from 2:1 to 1:1 limit them doing? We need to consider the detrimental impact this staffing crisis is having on the individual's quality of life and their independence.
9. Papworth Trust starts with the fundamental belief that people work in social care roles for a reason – because they care. However we are competing with job opportunities that pay more and are less stressful and had experienced numerous examples where staff are desperate to remain working with us, but simply can't. In such a vibrant labour market, there is no fear of being left out of work. We believe we offer excellent support and training to our employees, but in comparison to other industries pay is low and the demands of the job are high. Recruiting good quality staff in the social care sector is always a challenge but this has never been more critical.
10. We find that we are in direct competition with the retail sector, which is now seen as a more attractive field of employment. We have experienced staff leaving to pursue careers outside of the social care sector for better pay and less responsibility, combined with a reducing pool of new employees because we are in direct competition with the retail industry and others.
11. We argue that social care staff need parity with their colleagues in the NHS. It's not simply about pay, but also the terms and conditions and benefits that go with the role. As an example, there are well publicised discounts for NHS workers – at shops, restaurants and some tourist attractions by using their blue light card – but there is very little of the same for those who work in social care. The rhetoric during the pandemic exalted NHS staff, with the social care sector remaining unrecognised for their outstanding efforts.
12. The pandemic has caused people to reassess their lives. Shift patterns in social care can often prove difficult and encompass unsociable hours. When combined with the level of responsibility it brings, it can prove unattractive for many. However we do recognise for those who are able to financially continue in the sector, social care can also bring a real sense of satisfaction and personal reward which is something we champion at all opportunities.
13. Papworth Trust believes the image of social care needs to change to be a career option with good rates of pay and clear routes of progression, as opposed to something you fall into.

¹ Skills for Care, "The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England", October 2021.

This cannot be achieved without a national injection of funding and support. It has long been said that the health and social care sectors need to be better integrated. Understanding the role the social care sector plays in supporting the NHS is crucial to this. Social Care not only prevents people going into hospital, but also supports people by enabling them to leave hospital sooner than they otherwise could and working in collaboration, health and social care provide the 'whole' support to people, rather than the existing competing and fragmented system we have in place today.

Building a skilled workforce

14. Positively, Papworth Trust has seen a noticeable difference in the amount of free training available for providers and their staff over recent years. Unfortunately, it is not always easy to navigate and doesn't amount to development or career pathway, however when it has worked well we have been extremely grateful for this. Moving forwards, we need a national, cohesive and mirrored training package for all social care providers that is matched by the level of investment required. Through having a consistent training requirement across all social care providers, this removes a level of competition, enables staff to passport training across and enables the potential for more collaborative working between providers
15. Whilst there were high hopes for the care certificate, Papworth Trust does not believe it has achieved what it set out to do across the sector. The purpose of the certificate was to transfer training between organisations, but in reality when a new member of staff joins a new organisation they have to redo their training regardless of where they worked previously or how experienced they are. It is hard to pinpoint exactly why this is, but one explanation could be the level of responsibility that comes back on an organisation if anything were to go wrong in the future that could see a lack of training at fault.
16. Anecdotally the average age of our social care workforce is 45 years of age. We are not attracting younger age groups anymore and believe this is testament to the view that social care is not being seen as a career choice and is not championed within schools and colleges as a promising and attractive pathway for young people.
17. Papworth Trust believes more needs to be done to support leaders in the social care sector. Leaders are always fire-fighting, they lack investment and succession planning is extremely limited. Not having a full team of staff beneath them, further exacerbates a feeling of being unsupported and isolated in their roles.
18. In our opinion, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) is proving unhelpful and non-existent. Whilst they should be a body for championing the sector and influencing on a national level about funding and investment, they are instead becoming further detached.
19. We are extremely proud that our services have been rated as Outstanding and Good. However, sector standards will have undoubtedly slipped in a backdrop of Covid and the staffing crisis we face. The level of investment in training and development the sector can provide has diminished, when we are desperately trying to provide a frontline service to ensure our customers remain safe and happy. The CQC needs to work with the sector to help

support it through these challenging times and adapt its' inspection regime, considering the external world we are living in.

Wellbeing at work

20. Staff wellbeing is paramount at Papworth Trust. We recognise that a happy and supported workforce will in turn deliver the best outcomes for our customers. We do our best to lead with compassion, giving our staff teams access to a range of financial, health and wellbeing resources.
21. More recently we have set up a number of colleague experience groups. These groups are part of our commitment to increase diversity and inclusion in the Trust. We want to recruit and retain staff from a wide range of backgrounds, skills and experience so we can continue to deliver and build on the services we deliver to our customers. These colleague experience groups help us in understanding what we can do to support this. They are an opportunity to meet with our CEO and Executive team on an informal basis, to share their experiences, good and bad, with the intention that we learn from these experiences and make changes and improvements as a result. Whilst these groups are in their infancy, we have already seen tangible outcomes coming from them.
22. However, all of the above has been Papworth Trust's own doing. It is as a result of our commitment to supporting our staff and caring about their wellbeing, rather than anything the Government has put in place. Whilst we are committed to listening to our staff to learn how we can better support them, we are not aware of any measures or initiatives that has enabled the Government to do so. We would urge them to take this step to truly understand what it is like to work on the social care frontline, where the constant struggle to be able to work a reasonable number of hours or take a meaningful break is very real.

Conclusion

23. Papworth Trust wants every disabled person and their carers to get the support they need, when they need it. This will mean disabled people are able to live independent lives and are empowered to have choice and control in all that they do.
24. With a lack of vision on the long-term funding of the sector, combined with the issues of recruitment and retention of good quality staff leaves the sector at crisis point. Our dedicated staff deserve better pay commitments that come in immediately, which recognise the outstanding role they have played and continue to play throughout the coronavirus pandemic and beyond. We need a long-term solution to this crisis and we need it now.

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