

Written evidence submitted by The Care Workers' Charity (ASC0014)

The Care Workers' Charity (CWC) is dedicated to supporting the professional care workforce across the United Kingdom. As the leading organisation advocating for the wellbeing and recognition of care workers, we provide critical financial assistance, mental health support, and resources to those who dedicate their lives to caring for others.

Our submission represents the voice of professional care workers and highlights the critical challenges they face due to the lack of progress on adult social care reform. Through this evidence, we aim to underscore the devastating financial, social, and human costs of inaction, as well as the transformative potential of meaningful reform. It is essential that policymakers understand the vital role care workers play in society and the urgent need for systemic change to ensure the sustainability and dignity of the social care sector.

1. How much is inaction on adult social care reform costing the NHS and local authorities, and what impact does this have on patients and the public?

Inaction on adult social care reform places a significant financial burden on the NHS and local authorities. A hospital bed can cost as much as £3,000 per night, and many patients remain in hospital unnecessarily due to a lack of appropriate social care to facilitate their discharge. By contrast, the average cost of care at home or in the community is far lower, often between £1,000 and £3,000 per week.

This inefficiency has direct consequences for the public, such as longer waiting times, delays in receiving treatment, and an overstretched NHS. The failure to integrate budgets between health and social care perpetuates these inefficiencies, creating a fragmented system that is both costly and ineffective.

2. What NHS and local authority service reforms are not happening as a result of adult social care pressures, and what benefits are patients and the public missing out on?

The pressures on adult social care prevent essential reforms within the NHS and local authorities from being realised. For instance, improving access to GPs and enabling timely hospital discharges are often hindered due to gaps in social care provision.

Patients are missing out on preventative care and timely interventions, resulting in avoidable hospital admissions for conditions like urinary tract infections or malnutrition. Furthermore, individuals without family support frequently resort to A&E simply because there is no alternative support in place. This creates a vicious cycle that diverts NHS resources from those who need urgent medical attention, ultimately diminishing the quality and accessibility of services for the public.

3. What is the cost of inaction to individuals, and how might people's lives change with action on adult social care reform?

The human cost of inaction is devastating. For individuals who rely on social care, it often means a diminished quality of life, or worse, an inability to access even the most basic support, such as help with meals, medication, or mobility. This can lead to severe health issues, isolation, and, in extreme cases, premature death.

Care workers themselves also bear the brunt of this broken system. Many are underpaid, overworked, and face significant financial hardship. This often affects their mental health and impacts their ability to deliver high-quality care.

With proper reform, individuals could access care when they need it, enhancing their quality of life and fostering independence. Care workers would benefit from fair pay, professional recognition, and improved working conditions, which would, in turn, enhance recruitment and retention in the sector, reducing pressure on the existing workforce.

4. Where in the system is the cost of inaction on adult social care reform being borne the most?

The greatest cost is borne by individuals—both those who draw on care and those who deliver it. For care recipients, inadequate support can mean living in unsafe or undignified conditions. For care workers, it often means working long hours for poor pay, leading to financial and emotional strain. Families and unpaid carers also bear significant burdens, often sacrificing their own careers, health, and well-being to provide care that should be delivered by professionals.

The NHS and local authorities face enormous organisational costs as well, dealing with increased demand for services that could be alleviated through better-funded and better-structured social care.

5. What contribution does adult social care make to the economy and HM Treasury, and how might this change with action on reform?

Adult social care is a cornerstone of the British economy. According to the *State of the Adult Social Care Sector and Workforce in England 2024* report, adult social care contributes £68.1 billion to the economy, an increase of 13.2% from the previous year. This figure demonstrates the sector's substantial and growing economic impact.

With meaningful reform, this contribution could increase even further. Investing in fair wages, professional development, and innovative care delivery would not only benefit the sector but also enable unpaid carers to re-enter the workforce. Social care reform is an investment in both economic growth and social well-being, creating a stronger, healthier society.

6. To what extent are the costs of inaction on adult social care reform considered by the government when evaluating policies, including within the Budget and Spending Reviews? How should these costs be assessed and evaluated?

It was deeply disappointing to see social care receive only passing mention in the recent budget. Successive governments have underestimated the critical role social care plays in society and its interconnectedness with other sectors, particularly healthcare. Social care is too often viewed as an adjunct to the NHS rather than as an equal partner deserving of its own comprehensive strategy.

The government must reassess how it evaluates the costs of inaction, not only in financial terms but also in terms of human impact, such as reduced quality of life, increased demand on unpaid carers, and diminished mental health among care workers. The costs of inaction should be a core

consideration in all policy decisions, and the forthcoming spring budget must include a clear and substantial financial commitment to reforming and properly funding adult social care.

At The Care Workers' Charity, we are committed to supporting care workers and advocating for a future where social care is adequately funded, respected, and recognised for the vital role it plays in our society. Without urgent action, the repercussions of inaction will only worsen, to the detriment of individuals, families, and the wider public.

December 2024