



House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

14 February 2024

Dear [local MP]

In anticipation of the Budget announcement on 6 March we are asking for you to request an urgent review of the Treasury allocation of **2024/25 funding for the Social Care Sector in England**.

We believe that there is an urgency to ensure that we can continue to deliver care and support to some of the most vulnerable members of our society as we enter another financial year and to meet the circa **£12 - £14 billion** shortfall identified by independent analysts of the sector.

You will be aware of the anticipated inflationary pressures relating to the Government-set National Living Wage rate of £11.44, an increase of c.10%, announced in the Autumn Statement, and the Office for Budgetary Responsibility (OBR) assessment of inflation for next year of 3% (as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI)).

Social Care is a sector that remains **chronically underfunded**, but is faced with increased expectations year on year to support people with complex health care needs in support of our NHS colleagues. Often people discharged into our care will have conditions, which require additional skills training for our staff, but **without additional funding** to recognise their knowledge or experience or indeed the value of the work they do.

As citizens we are painfully aware of the financial challenges faced by our nation, but it is time that Social Care was prioritised politically and valued for its **£50+ billion contribution** to the public purse. You will be aware that this Government commissioned and accepted the findings of the Fair Cost of Care (FCC) exercise, but did not fund Local Authorities (LA) to meet their obligations or indeed their duty of care. The intention was that these findings would be used to ensure that LAs would be compelled to pay the true cost of care – clearly the findings of the exercise led Government to abandon any promises once again.

It should be noted that the figure highlighted by LBC radio on 15 January, clearly show that we had **circa 500+ care home closures** last year, this trend along with vital community-based services being unable to continue operating is continuing in 2024. This is having a devastating impact on **thousands of marginalised individuals and their families** who rely on our members (care providers) to provide essential Social Care and support.

Key facts:

We would emphasise to you the reality and implications of the human cost this lack of funding has on thousands of lifesaving services that we provide:

- We have over **152,000 staff vacancies** in the sector and will need an additional 500,000 by the 2030s.
- **Inflationary costs impact care providers, as they do all citizens, which include energy, food prices, interest rates and more.**
- Social Care supports people with **complex health care needs**, who would have been supported in the NHS 15 years ago.

Additionally, we would like to highlight the impact on the recently announced removal of the 20% discount to meet the salary thresholds of international recruits. Ironically, this in itself is a Government acknowledgement that the hourly rate for Social Care workers should be c.£13ph, which represents a 20% increase. To grow a domestic workforce, we must not create a tiering for international recruits, which disadvantages a domestic option.

We have had an **extended period of underfunding** and broken promises in relation to Social Care by successive governments. We have witnessed a **continued lack of support** over the past two decades and nominal support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; sadly no lessons have been learned and the **neglect of our sector** and those we support continues in the aftermath.

We must not underestimate the impact of the changes we are seeing under the Reform of Social Care banner, which includes the suggested changes to the health and Social Care visa for international recruits. The impact of this on those already recruited is substantial and will create challenges until the domestic workforce pipeline matures. These changes create an **atmosphere of uncertainty**, especially following the recent cost of living crisis, increased energy and insurance costs and ongoing inflationary challenges. We know that the process, although not yet in operation, is already impacting on those we are trying to recruit and those who are already in the country and in employment.

In order to meet the budgetary shortfalls, we see LAs being forced to increase council tax which also affects us as constituents. We are cognisant to the fact that a large proportion of LA funding is spent in Social Care which includes children's services, which clearly indicates that **LA funding is insufficient**. It is clear from engagement with the LA's that they remain concerned about their ability to offer sustainable increases.

Given the additional and ongoing problems for providers, our workforce, and the people we support set out in this letter, I would urge you to question the Department of Health and Social Care on the priorities they will bring forward for your general election manifesto.

The National Care Association, Care Association Alliance and Association of Mental Health Providers and its members, including ourselves, are calling for the following as a bare minimum:

- **An urgent review of the budget allocation for Social Care and Support services, focused on asking why Local Authorities and Health Commissioners are not appropriately funded to support proportionate fee 2024/25 budget uplifts to all providers.**
- **Communication as to what Government's long-term plan for social care will be and including when the national workforce plan will be published.**
- **That you champion Social Care and galvanise Ministers responsible for addressing these issues and their real-life impact on the most marginalised in our society.**

We urgently require your help to get assistance with this ongoing crisis.

Yours sincerely,
Berkshire Care Association
Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers
Oxfordshire Care Home Association
Buckinghamshire Care Providers Association

 **loving social care**