

Joint letter to the Home Secretary, Secretary of State for Health & Social Care and Chancellor of the Exchequer

Dear Cabinet members,

As some of the UK's largest non-profit care providers, caring for around 95,000 older people, and as members of the National Care Forum, we are writing to you to ask for immediate support to address the serious staffing shortages we are experiencing across the social care sector. Without intervention, we fear more and more older people will be unable to access the good quality care that they need and that we are dedicated to providing.

In his speech on 7 September announcing the Government's proposals, the Prime Minister made a commitment to 'investing in the quality of care, in carers themselves'. We are clear that this investment in care workers, and therefore in the continued quality of care, must happen now.

This is the most acute recruitment and retention crisis that we are aware of historically. It is the result of many years of underfunding in the sector, compounded by a number of other factors including some staff exhausted from the pandemic and others moving to the NHS due to different approaches on mandatory vaccine regulations.

At this point, social care providers estimate staff turnover across the sector to be in the region of 30% and rising, at a time when more and more people need care services. A recent survey of more than 2000 social care services by the National Care Forum (NCF) shows that 74% of providers have seen an increase in staff exits since April 2021 with 50% of workers leaving due to stress and 44% finding better pay elsewhere. This comes on top of serious workforce pressures pre-pandemic, with 112,000 care staff vacancies across the country and a 33% decline in social care nurses between 2012/13 and today.

Not only are these workforce issues causing our services to be stretched, they are also preventing organisations like ours from providing essential care to more people who need it. This is inevitably leading to more people having to stay in hospital unnecessarily when they are unable to access care packages and be safely discharged.

We welcome the recruitment and retention measures introduced in the Government's social care proposals, to support improved pay and conditions for all care staff in the longer term. But these measures will not solve the current workforce crisis, and we ask for the following immediate steps to ensure we are able to recruit and retain the social care workforce our country needs:

- Offer a retention bonus to care staff, in recognition of the dedication these skilled workers have shown throughout the pandemic
- Add care workers to the shortage occupation list for a defined period, to enable more workers from overseas to work in UK care homes with Skilled Worker visas
- Create a wholly flexible Workforce Capacity Fund now to support immediate recruitment & retention challenges & upskilling/ training
- Launch an effective national recruitment campaign to inspire people to join the care workforce
- Extend the Infection Control Fund (ICF) to offer practical support to care providers as our essential work to combat Covid-19 continues.

Without the social care workforce we have no care system. Their skills and dedication, highlighted by the pandemic, have been undervalued for too long.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Monaghan, Chief Executive, MHA Methodist Homes

Craig Moule, Group Chief Executive, Sanctuary Group including Sanctuary Care and Sanctuary Supported Living

Jane Ashcroft CBE, Chief Executive, Anchor Hanover

Dan Hayes, Chief Executive, The Orders of St John Care Trust

Vic Rayner, Chief Executive, National Care Forum

