



Department of Health & Social Care

*From Helen Whately MP
Minister of State for Care*

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The Rt Hon Damian Green MP

By email to: damian.green.mp@parliament.uk

22 March 2024

Dear Damian,

Thank you for your correspondence of 28 November to the Prime Minister about social care. Your letter has been passed to this department. I apologise for the delay in replying.

Workforce

The Government is fully committed to the ten-year vision for adult social care set out in the *People at the Heart of Care* white paper. We are working with local authorities to build preparedness, and the Government has made available up to £8.6 billion to put the adult social care system on a stronger financial footing. This includes £500 million announced this January, which has been made available specifically to support local authorities with the cost of social care in 2024/25.

We are improving recognition of people working in care and supporting career development through our plan for the care workforce. This plan will support care workers to develop their skills and their careers, including a new care workforce pathway, a new care certificate qualification, a digital skills passport and new funded training schemes. There will also be £15 million more support for international recruitment.

The Government has launched a new Care Workforce Pathway that will provide a framework for employers and care workers to develop skills and experience in the sector. Further details can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-workforce-pathway-for-adult-social-care/care-workforce-pathway-for-adult-social-care-overview.

On 28 July 2023, we announced a £600 million package for adult social care. This includes a further £570 million of ringfenced funding for adult social care across the financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25. The Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF) Workforce Fund is worth £365 million in 2023/24 and £205 million in 2024/25. The MSIF Workforce Fund closely mirrors the existing MSIF and makes a total of £927 million in 2023/24 and £1.05 billion in 2024/25.

The MSIF Workforce Fund will support increased adult social care capacity, improve market sustainability and enable local authorities to make tangible improvements to adult social care services, with a particular focus on workforce pay.

The Government recognises that local areas are best placed to design and deliver effective care initiatives that are tailored to meet local needs. In recognition of this, the MSIF Workforce Fund is designed to have the same flexibility as the MSIF to meet local pressures. Local authorities can choose to use the funding to:

- increase the fees paid to adult social care providers, particularly as we continue to prepare for the implementation of charging reform;
- increase adult social care workforce capacity and retention; and
- reduce adult social care waiting times.

We have published a policy statement and grant determination at www.gov.uk/government/publications/market-sustainability-and-improvement-fund-workforce-fund.

We encourage local authorities to work closely with providers to use this additional funding to grow workforce capacity and invest in improved pay for people who work in care.

Most care workers are employed by private sector providers, which set their pay and terms and conditions independently of the Government. Local authorities work with care providers to determine fees, which should take account of wages, based on local market conditions. Local authorities should assure that providers are remunerating staff sufficiently to retain an effective workforce.

Supported Living

We are additionally investing up to £700million on a major transformation of the adult social care system, which includes improving care workers' skills and supporting career progression, investing in technology and digitisation, and adapting people's homes to allow them to live independently.

The inaugural meeting of the Older People's Housing Taskforce took place on 16 May 2023. The taskforce is bringing together experts from across the sector and people with lived experience to make recommendations on how we can provide greater choice, quality, and security of housing for older people.

Technology

We have several government initiatives to drive digitisation and use of technology across the social care sector to improve the quality, safety and personalisation of care and support services.

We are funding an ambitious programme of digitisation for adult social care that is delivered through integrated care systems, investing almost £50million so far, and a further £100million over the next two years, as committed in our *Next Steps to Put People at the Heart of Care* White Paper.

As part of this work, we are supporting local systems to identify and invest in care technologies that address local population needs and priorities. These care technologies can be used by an individual, their carer or their care provider to support quality of life and the provision of high-quality, safe and personalised care.

They include technologies for providers to facilitate care, and consumer devices, smart home technologies or telecare that can help people live more independently. Examples also include technologies that enable virtual and remote support, such as AI-enabled sensor-based technologies, which identify changes in a person's daily routine, and medication management technologies can support people with their prescription regime.

On 24 October 2023, the Department launched the Accelerating Reform Fund which provides a total of £42.6million over 2023/24 and 24/25 to support innovation and scaling in adult social care and to kick start a change in services to support unpaid carers. This fund includes our commitment to invest up to an additional £25million to support unpaid carers.

Integrated Care Boards

The Better Care Fund (BCF) is one of the main ways that we promote the integration of health and social care in England. The BCF requires integrated care boards and local authorities to make joint plans and pool budgets for the purposes of integrated care, providing a context in which they can work together on shared objectives.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Whately', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

HELEN WHATELY