



From [the Health Devolution Commission](#)

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30th May 2024

Dear Madam or Sir

This is the response of the Health Devolution Commission (the Commission) to the DHSC call for evidence on its proposed care workforce pathway for adult social care.

The Health Devolution Commission is an independent cross-party and cross-sector body working to champion and support the successful implementation of devolved and integrated health and social care services across England. It was established in 2020. Its co-chairs are the Rt Hon Sir Norman Lamb, Rt Hon Andy Burnham and Imelda Redmond.

The Commission has received evidence and discussed issues concerning the health and the social care workforce on a number of occasions in recent years. We would conclude that Government policy on the social care workforce should address five key challenges:

- 1 **Recognising and actively supporting all parts of the health and social care workforce:**
 - Paid staff working in formal health, social care and public health settings employed by the public, private and voluntary sectors (e.g., hospitals, care homes, GP surgeries, community health services, and domiciliary care providers)
 - Paid staff working in informal settings at home or in the community (e.g., personal assistants to individuals)
 - Volunteers, friends and family that provide unpaid personal and community support to people with health and social care needs, and who can help to address issues such as loneliness and isolation
- 2 **Eliminating low pay** and uncertain working conditions of the social care workforce
- 3 **Filling staff shortages** and reducing high staff turnover in social care services (currently there are around 165,000 vacancies -11%)
- 4 **Developing an integrated approach** to the planning and management of all parts of the NHS, social care and public health workforces (recruitment, training and career development) through a combined 'People Plan' framework
- 5 **Supporting local integrated people plans** that directly link to the service plans of integrated care systems.

The Commission recognises that the proposed care workforce pathway is deliberately narrow in scope and regrets that it therefore does not address these central workforce challenges.

However, the Commission welcomes the intention of creating a clearer workforce pathway for adult social care that will help to overcome the misguided perception of care work as low skilled. The pathway, with its proposals about different roles and their associated qualifications, will help support the professionalisation of the social care workforce; and this in turn will help to attract and retain people in social care as it is increasingly perceived as a genuine vocation and career.

We also welcome the recognition that the social care workforce makes a significant contribution to the economy and would emphasise that financial support for the care workforce is an investment with social and economic benefits for every community.

In taking the proposed care pathway forward we would encourage the Government to work collaboratively with partners from all sectors to:

- Fully recognise the link between care skills/responsibilities and pay/financial incentives to progress at every level
- Make very clear the link between qualifications, pay and different roles and levels in the pathway
- Demonstrate the inter-relationship and direct links between the social care workforce and the NHS workforce pathways at every level to facilitate the development of integrated health and social care workforce planning nationally and locally through ICSs.
- Take forward its proposed development of a universal set of values for the adult social care workforce alongside development of a parallel set of values for adult social care employers
- Identify how the measures proposed in the care workforce pathway will be funded
- Bring forward clear proposals for the development and support of paid staff who work in informal settings at home or in the community, particularly personal assistants to individuals
- Consider how the care workforce pathway relates to recognition and support for the contribution made by unpaid carers

In conclusion, whilst we welcome the care workforce pathway as a significant step forward, we would reinforce the message we have heard repeatedly as a Commission that the most fundamental challenge at present for improving social care is the low pay of care workers.

Yours sincerely



Rt Hon Sir Norman Lamb
Co-chair, the Health Devolution Commission