

Question for Short Debate: to ask Her Majesty's Government when they will publish their White Paper on Social Care – Lord Dubs
House of Lords, Wednesday 8 July

The COVID-19 pandemic has put unprecedented strain on a care system already in crisis. Political parties must act now to ensure the social care system is supported to deliver fair and high-quality care for all who need it. Alongside many others, we are calling for urgent and fundamental reform of our care system. Below are Independent Age's key calls.

The future social care system should include **free personal care for people in later life** – which includes help with tasks such as getting out of bed, going to the toilet and preparing meals. Our analysis shows that it is popular, fair and simple.

Free personal care will enable people in later life to live in their own homes for longer and support them to live independent lives for as long as possible. Free personal care would also reduce delayed transfers of care (DTC) from the NHS. In Scotland, where personal care has been free for those aged over 65 since 2002, there has been a significant decrease in the number of DTCs, and the increased spending on social care has resulted in lower spending overall on health and care for older people.¹

There is a consensus forming around the principle of care free at the point of use. Our national polling with the thinktanks IPPR and Policy Exchange in May 2020 shows support for an extension of NHS principles - free at the point of need and taxpayer funded. **Nearly two-fifths of those polled support additional funding coming from general taxation for social care, just like the NHS.** The Lords Economic Affairs Committee also recommended the introduction of free personal care in the report following their 2019 summer inquiry on the long-term future of social care funding.

A robust statutory appeals system for care and support assessments is needed as part of any future reforms to create a more open and accessible social care system.

Independent Age's report, *Reviewing the case: The right to appeal in adult social care* revealed that **as few as one in five local authorities have a dedicated appeals process** for decisions around care and support needs. We regularly hear from people calling our helpline about the significant impact that a lengthy complaints process through the Ombudsman can have on their lives.

Any reform to the social care system must be accompanied by a **comprehensive workforce strategy** and fundamental improvements for employment conditions.

The coronavirus pandemic has shown how vital the contribution of the social care workforce is to the fabric of our society. However, the vacancy rate within the sector is high, and pay, progression and conditions are poor. The Department of Health and Social Care must improve on these areas and lead on the development of a comprehensive workforce strategy which brings together health and social care intelligence to better coordinate and collaborate, as well as encouraging local authorities to produce workforce strategies that complement the national approach.

For more information please contact Aidan Smith, Public Affairs Officer, on Aidan.Smith@independentage.org

¹Bell D et al (2013) Free personal care for older people: A wider perspective on its costs. University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.
https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/46778/2/FEC_36_3_2013_BellIDNFRutherfordAWrightRE.pdf