

All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Adult Social Care

Co-Chairs: David Warburton MP, Helen Hayes MP & Baroness Greengross

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The Rt. Hon. Matt Hancock MP

The Secretary of State for Health & Social Care
The Department for Health & Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

26 March 2020

Dear Secretary of State for Health & Social Care,

Concerns Raised By Members of the Working Group of the APPG on Adult Social Care

As the Co-Chairs for the All Party Parliament Group (APPG) on Adult Social Care we would like to take this opportunity to make you aware of the following issues and concerns that have been brought to our attention from the various members of the Working Group, which supports the work of the APPG and advises on matters relevant to the sector and people who rely on care and support. The member organisations of the APPG's Working Group are listed at the foot of this letter.

First, we appreciate the many challenges the government and the country at large is facing during this very difficult time and the APPG approaches these matters in the spirit of being constructive in our overall approach. We also recognise that in order to be successful in combatting COVID 19 the adult social care sector is a key partner in the country's efforts and is ready and willing to play its part in the days, weeks and months ahead. However, in order to play its part the social care sector will require support and resources from the Government, so its capacity and expertise can be used to best effect. Every day the social care sector supports thousands of disabled, children and young and older people to live good and rewarding lives – but the challenges it faces today are bigger than anyone could have imagined in peace time. These challenges could lead to the financial collapse of some care providers, which would exacerbate many of the problems faced. For this reason while we welcome the publication of the Emergency Legislation to deal with COVID 19, there remains many challenges in the following areas on which we seek the Government's urgent and immediate attention:

Testing for COVID 19 – It is important that the availability of testing for COVID needs to rapidly improve for the adult social care sector. This includes both care and support staff – including Personal Assistants – and those who are in receipt of support. Without the prioritisation of testing for people in the social care system we are concerned it could impact on the ability of the sector to keep people safe. It is also important that we have a clear plan in place – along with clear time scales and details as to how the social care workforce can access it – to include care and support staff.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – It is particularly important that people who work in social care are able to access the PPE they need to fulfil their responsibilities. For this reason we welcome the guidance recently issued by the Government that it '...will implement a distribution strategy for the UK's stockpiles of key medicines and equipment (e.g. protective clothing). This will cover the NHS/HSCNI, and extend to social care and other sectors as appropriate.' We seek assurances that the Strategy will ensure that supplies will be maintained throughout the period required. This is now becoming a critical issue with many staff and social care settings still not receiving the PPE they need – and of their right quality and quantities – to do their jobs safely and properly.

The role of the Regulators - Further guidance is required as to the role of the CQC and other Regulators during this period and the expectations that will be placed on organisations and individuals, particularly as a consequence of the staffing challenges that will be faced.

The Social Care Workforce – We welcome the inclusion of social care and support staff – including Personal Assistants – as “key workers”, so that people who work in social care can still take their children to school during this time. However, the social distancing and quarantine guidance is already having an impact in staffing levels, and social care settings will continue to face significant pressures in the weeks and months ahead. It is also important that in the process of redeploying staff to social care, safeguarding measures are in place to protect the interests of people who receive care. Many people also rely on Personal Assistants in their own homes, and if they are subject to social distancing and isolation, what measures will be put in place to ensure people are still able to access safe and high quality support? There are also concerns that emergency guidance is not recognising the role of individual employers and their PA’s and that new measures being drafted relate primarily to provider organisations, leaving individual employers and their PA’s feeling isolated and confused about critical contingencies.

There will also be a need to support the demands placed on the social care workforce – and many individuals who work within it - when care staff need to self-isolate, or practice social distancing to help support their family members. For this reason further clarity is required about the status and vital role of care and support staff as ‘key workers’ to ensure their children can still access local support when necessary and appropriate.

Health Support Via Remote Technology – Understandably many people in who work in General Practice are now working remotely, so they can provide medical advice and support without being in physical proximity. However, not all social care settings and individuals homes will have the necessary internet connection or facilities to allow residents/patients to speak with their local doctor. We seek assurances that when necessary people will still be able to access safe General Practice support in person.

Improving The Morale of Social Care Staff – The staff who work in our social care system are at the frontline of the crisis and their morale is a key factor in ensuring the wellbeing of the people they provide and care support for is maintained also. The staff who work in the social care workforce need to receive the recognition, support, respect and parity of esteem with NHS staff, from the Government and society more generally, so their contribution to this vital this national effort is fully appreciated.

Housing Provision - The role of housing - particularly where housing providers provide supported housing and care – provides an opportunity for the Government to engage with Housing Associations about providing both homes and social care during this period. The UK’s housing sector also has a key role to play to help relieve pressures on the NHS and ensure we do not have problems created by delayed discharge.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the various points raised in this correspondence and we appreciate the significant pressures on the government during this time. If you think it would be helpful, we would be willing to facilitate a conference call with the Minister for Social Care and the APPG’s Members and Working Group, to discuss matters further. If you have any queries on this matter please contact Peter Hand of the Secretariat of the APPG.

Yours sincerely,



David Warburton MP



Helen Hayes MP
Co-Chairs of the APPG for Adult Social Care

Sally Greengross

Baroness Sally Greengross

cc Members of the APPG’s Working Group – National Care Forum, Think Local Act Personal (TLAP), Home Group, Methodist Homes, Skills for Care, Anchor Hanover, Choice Care Group, Care Tech, Dimensions, Four Seasons Healthcare & CIC.