



United Kingdom Homecare Association
The professional association for homecare providers

Helen Whately MP
Minister for Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0EU

Sent by email to: pshelenwhately@dhsc.gov.uk

20 July 2021

Dear Minister,

Homecare workforce – serious shortage of careworkers

Over the last two months, members of United Kingdom Homecare Association (UKHCA) have expressed growing alarm and concern about inadequate workforce capacity to meet demand for home-based support and care.

Many employers say they have never experienced such difficulty in retention and recruitment and fear for the well-being and safety of older and disabled people.

Providers' concerns have been echoed by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services in their [Spring Survey 2021](#).

To obtain feedback from a wide range of homecare providers on current workforce pressures, we conducted a survey of UKHCA members on 8 July 2021.






The results of this survey are reported and discussed in detail in an article linked here on the [shortage of careworkers in homecare](#).

Responses were received from 140 homecare providers, from small and medium enterprises to the largest organisations. Respondents represented a mix of state-funded and private-pay providers.

Of those who took part, 91 per cent said that recruitment is harder now than before COVID-19, or *the hardest it has ever been*.

Difficulty recruiting homecare workers is particularly worrying, as two-thirds of providers reported that more careworkers are leaving their roles than before the pandemic, or *more often than the employers could ever remember*. Hardly anybody thought retention rates had improved.

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Three quarters of homecare providers surveyed said demand for their services had increased, or significantly increased, in the last two months.

Many factors affect capacity of the homecare workforce.






Our survey highlights that inadequate funding, which affects careworkers' pay, terms and conditions of employment, and the way that homecare is commissioned and purchased, has a significant negative impact.

Competition with other business sectors, such as hospitality and retail; COVID-19 and associated policies; and migration policy are also having a detrimental effect on number of homecare workers available.

To avoid harm to older and disabled people through inability to provide care and support services, we call on the government to take urgent action to address these issues as follows:

Immediate policy changes needed

1. Revise migration policy with urgency by:
 - o Adding all careworkers to the Shortage Occupation List and reducing the salary threshold for immigration;
 - o Waiving the Immigration Skills Charge for careworkers, reducing the cost of obtaining the legal Right to Work for careworkers.
2. Clarify and update the official guidance on "[Management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings](#)" to reflect the [new self-isolation guidance for health and careworkers](#), to avoid confusion. Self-isolation requirements are having a major adverse impact on workforce capacity at present, so the change is welcome. It is, however, unclear how workable it will be in the short-term for local public health teams to authorise all risk assessments.
3. Review restrictions on movement between care settings of double-vaccinated and tested careworkers, assessing relative risks, to limit careworkers leaving jobs in social care for employment in the NHS, as is happening at present.
4. Consider exemption from quarantine for live-in careworkers arriving in the UK from outside the Common Travel Area, provided they are double-vaccinated, PCR-tested, and without symptoms of COVID-19. It is important to balance the mitigated risk of infection with that to the safety and well-being of highly dependent older or disabled people being left without care. Current quarantine

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arrangements are significantly reducing the willingness of careworkers to travel to the UK, particularly from EEA and EU countries.

5. Recognise legitimate vaccination certificates of careworkers from outside the UK, in addition to those supplied by the NHS. Current rules are unnecessarily impeding recruitment of fully vaccinated careworkers from overseas.
6. Drop proposals for a requirement on social care providers only to deploy staff who are fully vaccinated, in favour of a voluntary approach to vaccination of homecare workers. Combine this with support for services with a higher proportion of vaccine hesitant staff; for example, funding health professionals and community leaders to support employers with careworkers who are vaccine-hesitant.
7. Release targeted Workforce Capacity funding, paid directly to employers, which enables care providers to pay enhancements to staff to encourage them to remain in the care sector, rather than move to hospitality or retail.
8. Re-invigorate the national recruitment campaign for careworkers.
9. Provide bonuses of £500 per careworker to thank them for their extreme dedication and service at a time of national emergency, as has already happened in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
10. Recognise homecare in internal and public communications. Doing so costs nothing and makes a huge positive difference.
11. Fund occupational health support for careworkers, as is available for NHS staff.

Long-term policy reform required

1. Fund social care adequately so that homecare workers are paid fairly for the skilled roles they perform, and at least on a par with equivalent public sector roles.
2. End the practice of councils and the NHS purchasing homecare "by-the-minute", alternatively focusing on achieving the outcomes people want.
3. Support development of an expert-led workforce strategy for social care and a 10-year workforce plan, aligned with the NHS People Plan.
4. Create a professional register for careworkers in England, covering all paid social care workers in both regulated and unregulated care services. Registration of careworkers needs to be adequately funded and carefully implemented.

We look forward to your prompt response and thank you in anticipation for your help.

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Yours sincerely,

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United Kingdom Homecare Association

Copies by email to:

Michelle Dyson, Director General, Adult Social Care, DHSC
Tabitha Jay, Director Adult Social Care (Workforce and long-term reform)
Tom Surrey, Director Adult Social Care (Quality)
Claire Armstrong, Director Adult Social Care (Delivery)
Mark Brown, Funding and Legislation, DHSC
Ian Rose, Funding and Legislation, DHSC
Oonagh Smyth, CEO, Skills for Care
Simon Williams, Local Government Association
Cathie Williams, Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
Colin Angel, Policy Director, UKHCA

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