

Local Government Association briefing

Support available to carers and the ‘Carers Action Plan 2018-2020’

House of Lords

21 June 2018



Key messages

- Supporting and improving the wellbeing and rights of carers is a priority for local government. Councils currently support many carers to continue their caring role. They do this through the provision of a range of services such as home care and respite care. The role of carers in our health and care system is vital and the contribution carers make to people with social care needs is significant.
- The Carers Action Plan should be considered an opportunity to address the needs and wellbeing of ‘unknown’ carers. This includes those people not known to local services or people who may not identify themselves as carers. They are often at risk of suffering from poor health and wellbeing themselves if the burden of care becomes too great. This is particularly an issue for young carers.
- Councils are under a legal duty to identify young carers and carry out assessments that consider the impact on the child and whole family. Finding those young carers is challenging as they are often isolated and hidden from view. The last census puts the official figure for young carers at nearly 170,000.ⁱ However, research by the BBC and Nottingham University has suggested the true figure may be four times higher than official estimates claim.ⁱⁱ
- Adult social care is a vital council service which helps to transform people’s quality of life and supports adults and carers of all ages with a range of different needs. It will face a funding gap which will exceed £2 billion by 2020 if an urgent solution is not found. The forthcoming Care and Support Green Paper must deliver a sustainable solution that ensures the long-term future of social care. It is important given the funding pressures that Government balances its ambition with pragmatism, to ensure it does not over-promise and under-deliver.
- Good local public services are the essential bedrock for mental and physical health, wellbeing and resilience. The Government must therefore reverse the £200 million reductions made to the public health budget in 2015 and stop plans to further reduce the budget by £331 million.
- A recent ComRes poll commissioned by the LGA found that the vast majority of parliamentarians (84 per cent of MPs and 81 per cent of Peers) agree that additional funding should go to councils’ social care budgets to tackle the funding crisis.ⁱⁱⁱ This means that there is agreement among national and local politicians that we need new money for social care. We need to work with the Government to deliver this.

Briefing

Background information

LGA response to the publication of Carers Action Plan

Responding to the Government's launch of its Carers Action Plan, Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the Local Government Association's Community Wellbeing Board, said:

"Supporting and improving the wellbeing and rights of unpaid carers is a top priority for councils who fully recognise their vital role and the significant contribution they make to people with social care needs, and the wider health and care economy. Without these vital informal carers, the safety net of care and support they provide to thousands of people every day would collapse.

"As care work can be physically and emotionally demanding, the Carers Action Plan needs to address the wellbeing of 'unknown' carers because social care can be left to pick up the pieces if they become unwell through their work, often by ignoring their own health needs. It also needs to ensure the needs and life prospects of young carers are not diminished by their caring role.

"As a society, we need to do more to ensure the role of a carer is seen as a positive, rather than a stigma, and we are keen to work with government on the implementation of its action plan, making sure that carers are fully supported and signposted to services to avoid them and families reaching crisis point and care breakdown.

"However, if we are to achieve our aspirations for all carers - who are needed in increasing numbers to address the rise in those needing care - and fulfil the ambition and intent of the Care Act, government needs to plug the funding gap facing adult social care and support which is set to exceed £2 billion by 2020.

"It also needs to ensure the progress that may be made from this action plan can be carried forward into the future by mainstreaming carers support in its forthcoming Green Paper on care and support for older people."

The importance of carers

It is important for society that carers have the support they need to maintain their own wellbeing and to be able to lead fulfilling lives; to maintain social relationships, undertake education and training, maintain employment, be active community members, and so forth. Councils' ability to provide this well-being support is undermined by the continued cuts to the public health, and other council budgets.

Case study on young carers

We have published a report^{iv} setting out the importance of meeting the health and wellbeing needs of young carers. This report also provide a range of case studies, outlining examples of good practice.

Local government funding

Local government provides more than 800 local services, a significant proportion of which help improve wellbeing and tackle the social determinants of health. This includes housing, employment, welfare, leisure and transport and these help support the health and wellbeing of carers. It is essential that potential solutions identified in the care and support green paper feed through to the Spending Review. This must provide an additional source of funding for local government as part of an overall settlement that provides sustainable funding for all the vital services that councils deliver. We have argued publicly that all funding options to tackle the social

care crisis must be on the table given the scale of the current crisis.

Adult social care funding

Without essential council services, which help people live healthy lives in their own homes and communities, the NHS cannot thrive and further rises in demand will see the A&E crisis spiral to an unresolvable, year-round problem. The same commitment is now needed for adult social care, which deserves to be given parity with the health service. There cannot be a sustainable NHS without a sustainable adult social care system^v.

Adequately funding social care will deliver benefits for local communities and savings for the public purse. For example, funding an expansion in social care capacity would alleviate NHS pressures and therefore enable more people to be discharged quickly and safely from hospital. Councils have worked hard to protect adult social care spending. Despite these efforts, our latest analysis on the funding gap faced by councils show that this approach is not sustainable:

- Since 2010, councils have had to deal with a £6 billion funding gap in adult social care services.
- We estimate that adult social care faces an overall gap of £2.2 billion by 2020. This includes £900 million to meet core funding pressures and an immediate and annually recurring £1.3 billion needed to stabilise the provider market. This figure is the difference between what care providers say they need and what councils currently pay.
- The measures the Government has taken in recent years to tackle the funding crisis facing adult social care have been welcome. However, the Government position that councils have ‘access to up to £9.4 billion more dedicated funding for social care over three years’ (Government response to Competition and Markets Authority report on care homes) is problematic for several reasons:
 - The council tax precept shifts the burden of tackling a clear national crisis onto councils and their residents.
 - Last year’s Adult Social Care Support Grant was not new money and was instead created from savings of equivalent value from the New Homes Bonus. It was in effect a redistribution of funding already promised to councils and actually left some councils worse off overall as they lost more in NHB payments than they gained in the ASC grant.
 - The £2 billion Improved Better Care Fund monies give disproportionate dominance to the priority of reducing pressures on the NHS, and within that an extremely narrow focus on delayed transfers of care. This funding also reduces year on year and stops entirely after three years.

As we have highlighted,^{vi} the continued underfunding of social care is making it increasingly challenging for local authorities to fulfil their legal duties under the Care Act, leaving the ambitions of some aspects of the legislation at risk. Equally concerning is that by 2025 there will be another 350,000 people needing high levels of social care from councils.^{vii}

The situation is now critical and our care and support system is in crisis. This is not just the message from local government, it is the message from across the wider care and support sector. An immediate solution to the £2.2 billion funding gap is required. There also needs to be a solution for the long-term funding of adult social care.

The role of public health in supporting carers

While caring has been shown to be beneficial to health, it is acknowledged that if the provision of care becomes too time-consuming, without the provision of breaks and respite, it can become detrimental to health. 84 percent of carers surveyed for

the 2013 *State of Caring Survey* said that caring has had a negative impact on their health, up from 74 percent in 2011-12.^{viii} It is therefore important that carers have the support they need to maintain their own wellbeing and to be able to lead fulfilling lives; to maintain social relationships; undertake education and training; maintain employment; and be active community members.

Good local public services are the essential bedrock for mental and physical health, wellbeing and resilience. The transfer of public health from the NHS to local government and Public Health England (PHE) five years ago was one of the most significant extensions of local government powers and duties in a generation. It represents a unique opportunity to change the focus from treating sickness to actively promoting health and wellbeing.

Despite the benefits of having robust local public services, local authorities face a £331 million reduction to their public health budget, on top of a £200 million reduction announced in 2015.^{ix}

ⁱ For further information please visit:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160107224205/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census-analysis/provision-of-unpaid-care-in-england-and-wales--2011/sty-unpaid-care.html>

ⁱⁱ For further information please visit: <https://carers.org/key-facts-about-carers-and-people-they-care>

ⁱⁱⁱ ComRes surveyed 155 MPs (56 Conservative, 75 Labour, 12 SNP and 12 Other) and 103 Peers (30 Conservative, 40 Labour, 15 Liberal Democrat and 18 Crossbench/other) using a combination of paper and online surveys between 23 October 2017 and 11 December 2017. The key aims of this research were to track advocacy and efficacy against a comparator set of organisations; and measure attitudes towards local government funding and powers.

^{iv} To read the full report please visit: <https://www.local.gov.uk/meeting-health-and-wellbeing-needs-young-carers>

^v LGA responds to NHS 70th anniversary funding announcement, available at:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-responds-nhs-70th-anniversary-funding-announcement>

^{vi} For further information please visit:

https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.20%20budget%20submission_06.pdf

^{vii} For further information please visit: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/press/news/2017/08/cfasresearch/>

^{viii} Carers UK, *The State of Caring 2013*, available at: <https://www.carersuk.org/professionals/policy/policy-library/the-state-of-caring-2013>

^{ix} For further information please visit:

https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.20%20budget%20submission_06.pdf