

The profile of the workforce raises concerns about the heightened risk of coronavirus infection and mortality, which is likely to pose acute recruitment and retention problems at a time when there are unprecedented demands on the sector.

Care workers are more likely to be older, disabled, and members of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups than other workers. 21% of adult care workers were identified as BAME in 2018/19, compared to 14% of the working age population. 11% of social care workers were identified as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British backgrounds, compared to 3% of the working age population (Skills for Care, 2019). Care was one of the three broad occupational groups identified as having statistically significantly higher than average increases in excess deaths in 2020 compared to all occupations, along with security and professional drivers.

What further reforms are needed to the social care funding system in the long term?

The highly skilled, predominantly female care workforce must be properly valued, 50 years on from the Equal Pay Act. The Covid-19 outbreak has shown it is our social care essential key workers that have helped keep the country going and it's time to recognise their worth. Nowhere is pay justice and equality needed more than in the care sector. Our highly skilled social care workforce is still not recognised for the incredible work they do. The minimum wage, or even the real living wage, is not acceptable and is not enough. The Government need to ensure that in any reforms of social care that they recognise the value of this accomplished, predominantly female workforce. We will not allow for these key workers to be forgotten any longer.

There are also concerns about the very much privatised nature of social care, which is currently almost entirely provided by independent companies. In the last 10 years we have seen crisis in two major care providers: Southern Cross collapsed; Four Seasons Healthcare went into Administration.

The current financial model of social care is unsustainable. The potential impacts of Covid-19, a 'no deal Brexit' and the Government's Immigration Policy are yet unknown. Funding within social care is unclear. Some reports suggest that there is not enough money going into the social care system and further investment is needed from Government to support the independent care sector that is providing care for state funded residents. However, other reports suggest that large amounts of profits are being extracted out of social care via hidden profit extraction mechanisms, high rents, loans and dividends paid to investors.

GMB Recommendations

1. Full and normal pay when on sick leave to be a contractual right.
2. A real living wage in line with local government social care workers, including access to the Local Government Pension Scheme and other contractual terms and conditions relating to sick pay and annual leave.
3. A new funding settlement to address deep, structural problems in adult social care, including staffing levels, to meet the needs of residents and service users, providing care in homes and the community before NHS provision is required.
4. An effective model of registration in England.