

Social Care Campaign

I believe we must all receive dignified care in old age. With an ageing population, this is one of the biggest challenges our country faces. I support the Government's commitment to making sure this country works for everyone and that the most vulnerable in society gain the support they need.

I am happy to note that over 4 out of 5 people receive care from good and outstanding organisations, according to the Care Quality Commission, though there are certainly more improvements to be made. The Government recognises the current pressures facing local areas. Since 2015 local authorities have had greater flexibility over the use of the council tax social care precept, so they can choose to raise extra money as well as retain savings from the New Homes Bonus, totalling Â£240 million.

In 2017, the Chancellor committed an additional Â£2 billion to councils in England over three years to spend on adult social care services. Councils will have access in total to Â£9.25 billion more dedicated funding for social care over the next three financial years, and this has been further supported by an additional Â£150 million from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government this year. I am also happy to note that the Autumn Budget provides Â£42 million additional funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant in 2017-18, to support people with disabilities stay in their own homes throughout their care. This investment is central to the Government's efforts to reduce delayed transfers of care from the NHS to social care, and free up thousands of hospital beds.

Money alone will not fix the problem and reform is needed to encourage high standards across the whole country. Some councils already provide high quality social care within their existing budgets; and, half of all delayed discharges from hospital to home arise in just 24 local authorities. It is vital for us to consider ways of better joining up health and care services, and I am encouraged by the use of the Better Care Fund to assist local government and the NHS with the implementation of integrated health and care services.

The Government is currently producing a Green Paper, which will establish a new social care policy for the future. This will see a care policy which will meet the challenges of an ageing population, and will grapple with how to properly integrate health and social care, and make sure social care is financially sustainable. I acknowledge that there have been many consultations into care policy over the years; however I believe that the upcoming Green Paper will usher in a real cultural change into how we care for the elderly and vulnerable.

On a local level, I have also been in contact with both Independent Age and Healthwatch in relation to care homes. Healthwatch Staffordshire have adopted the Independent Age quality standards as part of their unannounced visits as a result. These standards not only promote cleanliness and quality of care within care homes but also focus on residents engaging in meaningful activities. I feel this is important as in some care homes residents were merely 'existing' rather than living full, independent lives. I will continue to work with both local and national bodies to make improvements to social care. Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.