

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
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01 August 2019

Dear Prime Minister

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment as Prime Minister. I am writing to you in my role as vice president of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), which is a charity and our members are all the Directors of Adult Social Services in England. We aim to further the interests of people in need of social care by promoting high standards of social care services and influencing the development of social care legislation and policy.

I know you are aware of the unprecedented situation we face in adult social care;

- an immediate gap in the funding position of Local Authorities of £3.25bn
- a fragile care market which has seen increased costs and shortages in labour
- a willingness to work with the NHS on implementing the funded NHS Plan but without sufficient resources to focus on preventative work.
- a public narrative where innovation on community-led solutions, where good social work, where new housing approaches are drowned out by the messages about crises
- a significant delay in producing a green paper on future funding models

Adult social care provides care, support, and safeguards for those people in our communities who have the highest level of need and supports their carers. It builds community cohesion.

Good care and support transforms lives, helping people to live well and gain independence. People are living longer but have more complex care and support needs. This is a cause for optimism. Once though, some of those needs would have been met by the NHS or in hospitals. Now there is, quite rightly, an expectation for more people to live at home, as part of our families and communities, but without sufficient community funds for this.

The charging arrangements for adult social care are outdated following the failure to implement the Care Act in full, and with no clear direction outlined in a green paper.

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You expressed in your speech in Downing Street a commitment to tackling the social care issue. We seek parity with the position of the NHS, being an essential partner to the aspirations of that service and with an equally important agenda.

When the NHS funding settlement of £20.5 billion per year by the end of five years was announced last year, the Government made a commitment to ensure that adult social care doesn't impose additional pressure on the NHS. We were pleased to see your announcement yesterday on the NHS. However, our systems are interdependent, so we cannot see real improvement without the same level of support for adult social care services.

Our 2019 budget survey found that adult social care departments have planned for £700m savings to their budgets to balance the books in 2019/20. Since 2010, there have been cumulative savings totalling £7.7 billion across adult social care departments. As a result, local authorities have become reliant upon short term funding streams to ensure delivery of vital frontline services and deliver balanced budgets. Our budget survey found that 92% of directors have assumed that the Better Care Fund – or equivalent – will continue into 2020/21, with 75% planning for the Improved Better Care Fund to continue.

Of course, the biggest impact this is having is on the lives of those in need of care, their families and their carers. Age UK have found an increase in 72% of older people with unmet needs since 2010, with 1.4 million now not receiving all the care and support they need. In addition, the number of people affected by the closure of home care providers in the last financial year was 7,019 – an increase of 113% from 2017/18. Similarly, 1,173 were impacted by care home closures.

The impact of having to move care home, or experiencing a change in care worker – one that may have visited someone every day for the past year – is profound for the individual's health and wellbeing. It also has a knock-on effect on the health and wellbeing of their families with nearly half a million people having to give up work in the past two years as a result of caring duties. This equates to about 600 people a day, being directly impacted financially, as well as inevitably emotionally and physically, by local authorities being unable to meet the needs of their loved ones.

Furthermore, aside from the impact that this undoubtedly has on the economy, the general economic value of a well-funded adult social care service to the Treasury is habitually overlooked. At present, the 1.5m paid workforce – both in private and public care sectors – is worth £46bn to the national economy; some 1% of GDP.

ADASS believes that in order to meet current and future pressures, adult social care needs an additional £3.25 billion in 2020/21 after assuming additional savings of £450 million that year. In subsequent years, we believe that further additional resources amounting to £1.7 billion in 2021/22 and £0.75 billion in 2022/23 will be required. This is based on the assumption that the resources currently available through the Better Care Fund continue to be available to support adult social care.

Therefore, we also need urgent clarity on whether the Better Care Fund and Improved Better Care Fund will continue. Without this, many councils risk being left in a position where they may have no choice but to begin decommissioning services later this year, which will impact both those that use the services, and those that provide them.

Certainty and sustainability are vital for commissioners and providers if they are to invest in and transform services, but we also find ourselves in a situation where four of the largest providers are currently up for sale. The uncertainty of Brexit has not helped

matters, with one potential investor pulling out citing Brexit. In an ideal world, we would like to find a way for cross-party dialogue.

We also want to see an increased emphasis on prevention and early intervention. There's been too much attention given to getting people out of hospital, rather than stopping them being admitted in the first place. A high proportion of councils (87%) have continued to experience pressure from increased admissions to hospitals, and 60% of directors again cite demand for social care as a result of premature or inappropriate discharge as a cause for concern. Insufficient primary care, community health care (including incontinence support) or mental health services (71%) and reductions to Continuing Health Care, shared care or health contributions to aftercare services under Section 117 of the Mental Health Act (73%) are also widespread pressures for councils.

The quality of the care and support we are able to provide is very much dependent upon a skilled, valued and, crucially, appropriately remunerated workforce. Like the NHS, hiring and retention of frontline staff is a real issue for many areas, particularly given the ongoing uncertainty surrounding Brexit. An overstretched workforce, with insufficient training and career opportunities means that the psychological reward of caring for people is greatly diminished. The low remuneration of care workers means that many cannot afford to live in some parts of the country or in decent quality accommodation. Suitable accommodation isn't just an issue for people receiving services but for the social care workforce as well. In the medium term, we need a national workforce strategy that provides clear steps as to how we can provide parity of esteem for frontline staff with NHS colleagues, as well as clear pathways for progression and development. In the longer-term we would like to see progress towards a salaried workforce to attract skilled frontline staff in more expensive parts of the country.

We hope you will commit to making adult social care a top priority during your tenure as Prime Minister and we would greatly welcome the opportunity to discuss with you in more detail the issues laid out in this letter.

Yours sincerely.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James A Bullion". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

James Bullion
ADASS Vice-President