

Winter 2020/2021- Prioritising care at home and support for unpaid carers this winter

Background

The forthcoming winter presents one of the most challenging, if not the most challenging, in the recent history of adult social care. The sector faces unprecedented challenges in terms of the sufficiency of care markets, the availability of a skilled workforce and the potential impacts of exiting the European Union on 1st January 2021. These challenges have only been further magnified by the onset of Covid-19.

Most importantly, if these major challenges are not addressed, then there will be a real and long-lasting impact upon people who access care and support services, their carers and the workforce.

The human cost of the Covid-19 outbreak to-date most starkly underlines why Government must act now; the number of people who died, care staff who gave their lives caring for others, those who experienced domestic violence, those whose mental health deteriorated, and those family carers who were left exhausted by 24/7 lockdown care.

Immediate Action is Required

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) are recommending that Government take the following actions as a matter of urgency:

An additional £480 million for increased care at home, home first, shared lives and community support.

The onset of Covid-19 has led to a significant shift in the type of care and support people want to access to meet their needs. Individuals and their families are increasingly, and where safe to do so, opting to remain in their own homes, through domiciliary care, utilising direct payments to employ personal assistants or accessing other forms of community support such as shared lives.

It is imperative that additional funding is required to allow local authorities to invest in an upscaling of provision in the areas set out above to enable individuals, their families and carers to have a range of options to meet their care and support needs. An enhancement in options will also provide additional capacity to discharge people from hospital, which must be underpinned by the 'home first' principle.

An Urgent Package of Support for Carers

Families and close friends providing unpaid care have been hit particularly hard during the pandemic and there's no doubt that services would have been overwhelmed if they had not provided unpaid care. But this has not been without significant cost to their health and

wellbeing and many are now worried they will be unable to cope. ***We need an urgent package of support for carers – an extra payment for those on Carer's Allowance to manage the costs of winter and a robust urgent breaks package for those most in need. Investing around £1.2 billion in care, which would provide carers with a weekly break.***

This is essential to get unpaid carers and their families through winter and through the pandemic but would also provide much needed employment as the economy seeks to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

The investment will far outweigh the costs of carer' breakdown and admission to hospital at a time when they can least cope.