

Agenda

Community Wellbeing Board: Supplemental Agenda

Wednesday 17 May 2023

11.00 am

18 Smith Square, London SW1P 3HZ

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The Government's plans for adult social care reform

Purpose of Report

For information.

Summary

On 4 April 2023, the Government published, 'Next steps to put people at the heart of care'. This plan follows the December 2021 white paper, 'People at the heart of care' and sets out how the Government intends to build on the progress made in the intervening period in implementing certain white paper proposals, as well as introducing new commitments. The plan is notable for reducing previously allocated funding for reforms and was criticised by partners across the adult social care sector for being a downgrading of previously stated ambition. This item is an opportunity to hear from Michelle Dyson, Director General of Adult Social Care at the Department of Health and Social Care on the plan's content and the Government's aspirations for care and support.

LGA Plan Theme: Putting people first

Recommendation

That the Board

Note the contents of this report by way of background to the Board's discussion with Michelle Dyson.

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The Government's plans for adult social care reform

Background

1. On 4 April 2023, the Government published, 'Next steps to put people at the heart of care'. This plan follows the December 2021 white paper, 'People at the heart of care' and sets out how the Government intends to build on the progress made in the intervening period in implementing certain white paper proposals, as well as introducing new commitments.
2. On funding, the plan refers to "the historic funding increase for adult social care announced at the Autumn Statement in November 2022" totalling "£7.5 billion over 2 years". On this, and while the additional funding is welcome, it is worth noting the following points:
 - 2.1 The element of the funding packaged as the Social Care Grant is not solely for adult social care and can be split with children's social care. The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services estimate that, on average, councils allocated 41 per cent of their 2022/23 allocation of this grant to children's social care.
 - 2.2 Other elements of the funding have to be spent to support hospital discharge, rather than councils having full discretion over its use. Some of this funding will be split between council and health bodies.
 - 2.3 The figures announced at the Autumn Statement assume that: (i) all social care councils will raise both their council tax and adult social care precept to the maximum; (ii) all additional income raised through council tax increases will be allocated to adult social care. The assumed new funding from council tax flexibilities is therefore best seen as a potential maximum amount.
3. Councils' adult social care budgets are a moving target and patterns of spend do not stand still from year to year. Instead, inflation, wage pressures and demographic changes constantly erode available resources. Given these pressures, and the points above that not all of the announced funding may actually be raised (council tax/precept) or go to adult social care (some will go to children's social care), it is highly unlikely that that the investment will do anything other than enable adult social care to stand still. These deep-seated issues need to be addressed to put adult social care on a long-term, sustainable footing. Overall, the Local Government Association has called for £13 billion to meet this combination of ongoing pressures and to ensure councils can meet all of their statutory duties under the Care Act. This includes £3 billion towards tackling significant recruitment and retention problems by increasing care worker pay.

4. On reform, the plan focuses on the following key areas:
 - 4.1 Improving access to care and support
 - 4.2 Recognising skills for careers in care
 - 4.3 Digital transformation in adult social care
 - 4.4 Personalising care through stronger data
 - 4.5 Improving transparency and accountability
 - 4.6 Supporting people to remain independent at home
 - 4.7 Driving improvement and innovation
 - 4.8 Joining up services to support people and carers
5. The plan is notable for reducing previously allocated funding for reforms. In particular, £500 million for measures to support the workforce announced in the December 2021 white paper has been halved to £250 million. And £200 million of a previously announced £300 million to bolster innovation in housing is now lost (we understand the remaining £100 million is now paying for home adaptations and meeting the cost of the current system).
6. In responding to the plan upon its publication, the LGA stated that: “This is a significant watering down of promises, which even as they stood would only have taken us on the first steps towards a more sustainable and refocused future for social care. Given the well documented capacity issues and levels of unmet and under met need, it is hard to see how reducing the funding available to begin to address some of the issues can be justified.”
7. The LGA was not alone in its disappointment with the plan as evidenced by the following reaction from partners.
 - 7.1 “This plan leaves the Government’s vision for reform in tatters...this new plan from the Government takes us backwards”, ADASS.
 - 7.2 “It is disappointing that [the plan] moves further away from delivering the reform that many older and disabled people need”, Homecare Association.
 - 7.3 “Like many others working to reform social care, we are disappointed that the government’s plans for delivering long-term change within the social care sector have been considerably pared back”, Social Care Institute for Excellence.
 - 7.4 “It is so disappointing that 18 months after publishing a social care strategy the Government’s plan involves rolling back its funding commitment to the care workforce by half. This issue lies at the heart of social care and to invest the

promised £500m and tackle it properly would make such a difference to the sector. Paid-for care is a vital source of support for families, allowing unpaid carers to work or get a break. This is a massive missed opportunity to improve the lives of so many people”, Carers UK.

7.5 “These measures are a dim shadow of the widescale reform to adult social care that this government came into office promising... When social care trends are going in the wrong direction, it is short-sighted for government to row back on what was already minimal funding and limited efforts to reform and improve social care in areas such as housing, technology and supporting the workforce ... These revised steps towards “reform” will do little to radically change the system and, at best, are the bare minimum needed to stop it from collapsing”, The King’s Fund.

Proposal

8. This Board agenda item is an opportunity for Members to share their views and concerns directly with the Director General for Adult Social Care at the Department of Health and Social Care, Michelle Dyson.

Implications for Wales

9. The issues set out above cover England only as social care policy in Wales is a devolved matter.

Financial Implications

10. All financial impacts of action arising from this report will be met from within existing LGA resources.

Equalities implications

11. Action to tackle inequality is an important feature of adult social care reform. Of particular note, it is imbedded in the new system of adult social care assurance, which remains a central plank of the Government’s reform agenda. CQC’s assurance framework is structured around four themes (Working with people; Providing support; Ensuring safety; and Leadership) and under each will sit a series of ‘quality statements’ which articulate what good quality adult social care looks like. To give one example, under the theme ‘Working with people’ there is a quality statement on ‘Equity in experiences and outcomes’. This is about seeking out, and listening to, people who are most likely to experience inequality in experiences and/or outcomes and tailoring care and support in response.



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Next steps

12. Members' views will inform the LGA's ongoing lobbying and influencing work on the future of adult social care and support.

