

Local Government Association,
18 Smith Square,
London,
SW1P 3HZ

7 January 19

Dear Local Government Association,

We are writing on behalf of the British Association of Social Workers (BASW). BASW is the strong and independent voice of Social Work and Social Workers with over 21,000 members. We welcome the Local Government Association's proactivity in facilitating debate about adult social care and your focus on the lives that people want to lead. We do, however, wish to express concerns on behalf of the membership of the organisation regarding the limited mention of social work and social workers within the recent LGA green paper titled 'The Lives We Want to Lead'.

In 2016, there were 19,000 social workers employed within adult social care. Of these 16,100 were in local authority employment. Despite these figures, there were only three mentions of social work within your document 'The Lives We Want to Lead' and there was no mention of the fundamental importance of the roles that social workers undertake in delivering that statutory responsibilities contained within the Care Act (2014), Mental Capacity Act (2005) and Mental Health Act (1983).

Social workers have expertise in building relationships and working in partnership with individuals to empower them to strive towards their individual goals. Social workers can support in the most complex of situations offering ethical, skilled support to individuals to explore their own situation, identify outcomes and determine support to strive towards independence. Social workers identify and promote networks across family, friends, community and wider society and understand the impact of social inequality, poverty, grief and loss upon these networks. Social workers also offer supervision and leadership to other professionals in delivering value based ethical interventions to support the health and wellbeing of an individual.

In our submission we called for a sector wide review of the application of the Care Act 2014 which should include an evaluation of how potential eligible needs are being reduced, how the criteria operates as a threshold, and how non-eligible needs are being addressed. This accords with your consultation response in which you state that there should be an end to the "focus on an eligibility driven approach to needs to one focused on prevention and picking up unmet need early to prevent escalation". However, we think that a review needs to address other issues as indicated by the nature and volume of complaints upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman that demonstrate that there is poor practice and misinterpretation in the application of the Care and Support Statutory Guidance.

BASW believes that sufficient time has elapsed since the Care Act came into force, for work to now be undertaken to identify and share the examples of social work practice within the current system. Surveys undertaken by the professional press indicate that there is good practice in some local authorities alongside poor practice in others however there has been little collation and dissemination of this by organisations with the resources and authority to do so. In addition, we believe that there are a number

of key decision-making areas where good practice has yet to be established, e.g. the significant impact on wellbeing decision (part of eligibility determination) and sufficiency of need (a key factor in the decision about the amount of a personal budget). We believe that a strategy is needed to develop good person centred practice, and BASW would wish to play an active role in this.

We consider that:

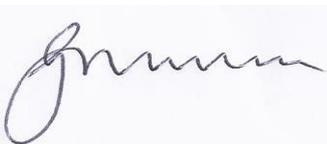
Care and support should start with people's own views of their needs and strengths, desired outcomes and what will help them to achieve these. People who receive care and support should be at the centre of the assessment and support planning process, in the way that best works for them. Decisions about how to promote wellbeing must be based on skilled professional judgement in partnership with people who need care and support. The way in which personal budgets are calculated and resources are taken into account in making decisions must be transparent.

- Skilled practitioners, including social workers, should make professional judgements about necessary and sufficient care and support, in partnership with people who need care and support; further debate is needed about how we increase transparency and fairness in resource allocation following this
- Based on their professional capabilities, social workers need to take a lead on rights-based and person-centred practice, which improves experience and outcomes of people by promoting their strengths and networks, and by identifying appropriate tailored support.

This will be helped by more funding, but it also requires skilled practice, transparency about processes and decision making, capturing of need that is not met, and consideration about how eligibility is applied across the country.

Whilst we are pleased there is a focus upon the importance of adult social care, we urge that you reconsider this omission and seek to promote the fundamental role of social workers in supporting individuals, managing risk whilst promoting the rights and wellbeing of adults, carers and communities.

Yours faithfully,



Gerry Nosowska
Chair - BASW



Maris Stratulis
National Director – BASW England



Andy Gill
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