

5 calls to help people to live later life well



- ① Investment
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MHA Manifesto 2019

MHA is one of the UK's largest providers of social care, providing accommodation, care and support services for more than 18,000 older people throughout Britain. We have seen big changes in the way care for older people is delivered and funded in the 75 years we have been delivering services. Over the years technological advancements have led to increased efficiency, effectiveness and quality of care – but ongoing cuts and increasing demand for care has led to social care being in a state of crisis.

With an ageing population, demand for care increasing among working-age adults, relentless cuts to local authority budgets and a workforce under immense pressure, there is an urgent need for Government action. A social care green paper was promised in the last Government's 2017 manifesto but has since been delayed six times.

The next Government **must** find a long-term solution. Yearly injections of cash which hardly cover stabilising the current system do not allow services to plan for the future or improve the quality of care they provide. Negotiating a sustainable funding programme is essential; however, this alone will not fix the structural challenges in social care, and funding must support an ambitious strategy for reform. In this manifesto, we use our extensive experience working to enable people to live later life well across the country to inform what we believe the next Government needs to do so that millions of older people can access the support and care they need to live comfortably and happily.

1 Investment

Social care has been a victim of unprecedented cuts to public services since 2010, which have seen local authorities reduce their spending on social care for older people in real terms by 17% despite rising demand. It is crucial that social care receives the long-term investment necessary to end the current uncertainty affecting the delivery of services and meet the requirements of the 1.4 million older people who the Care Quality Commission has found to not be receiving the care and support they need.



We are calling upon the next Government to ensure that all older people have good quality care and to cover the full cost of care for those who are less able, factoring in the whole package of quality, sustainability, a professional workforce and a high standard of accommodation.



② Working together

Health and social care integration has the potential to make a real difference to people's lives. The care sector should have parity with health services in a system which recognises the non-clinical aspects to health and wellbeing and overcomes the fragmentation of the current structure. While long-term investment will relieve pressure and give services space to work together, there is also a need for a single shared approach to be developed, aiming to measure integration not only of NHS and social care providers but also of voluntary sector organisations and other local partners. The Integrated Care Systems announced in the NHS Long Term Plan may provide a possible framework for this approach.

Social care must be integrated with the NHS at all stages to keep people healthier for longer, relieve pressure on the NHS and give adequate support to the social care sector.

③ Supporting our workforce of heroes

The social care sector needs 1.62 million dedicated, compassionate, skilled staff. These people do a heroic job, making a difference to the lives of others on a daily basis. Their work and skills should be celebrated across society, their pay increased, and additional training and career paths opened.

However, decades of low pay and low esteem has led to a shockingly high national average staff turnover rate of 40%. Also worrying is the fact that 8% of all roles in social care are currently vacant (the equivalent of 122,000 jobs).

We need action across many levels to address this: the Government urgently needs to invest in the nursing workforce and bring back bursaries for training; ongoing and well resourced care sector recruitment campaigns should be developed; and, finally, as Brexit is finalised in the coming months, it is crucial negotiators recognise the vital contribution of the EU social care workforce, and people from outside of the country should have access to work in the social care sector, which should be reflected in any Immigration regime.





④ Action on the loneliness epidemic

Loneliness is said to be reaching ‘epidemic’ levels in the UK: research by Independent Age found that more than one in three people over 75 say their feelings of loneliness are out of their control, and our own experience supporting 18,000 people across the country has been similar. The evidence on the physical effects of loneliness on people’s health is overwhelming, with one study showing it is as damaging to our bodies as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and increases the likelihood of mortality by 26%. The Government’s Loneliness Strategy and Building Connections Fund launched last year were welcome steps forwards in tackling social isolation and increasing opportunities for older people to have meaningful interactions.

The next Government must move from development to delivery of the Loneliness Strategy to ensure tangible changes in key areas such as social support are delivered.

⑤ An advocate for older people

England and Scotland are lagging significantly behind the rest of the UK in establishing an independent body to advocate for older people’s rights. A Commissioner for Older People was established in Wales in 2006 and in Northern Ireland in 2011; it is high time the rest of the UK followed their lead. A Commissioner would act as an advocate for older people and ensure older people’s voices are heard and acted upon. Legal powers would support a Commissioner when reviewing the work of public bodies and holding them to account when necessary.

The next Government must follow Wales and Northern Ireland in establishing a UK Older People’s Commissioner, as is already in place for children.

