

Green Paper for Adult Social Care in England

British Association of Social Workers: Initial Position Paper

June 2018

Introduction

Ahead of the Green Paper, due in Summer 2018, this paper sets out the position of the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) about what the Green Paper needs to achieve, based on the social work perspective on social care and with particular reference to the role of social work. BASW is the representative body for social work and social workers in the United Kingdom with over 20,000 members. This paper was produced by the Adults Practice, Policy and Education Group in consultation with members.

The Green Paper is focussed on social care for older people, their carers and families. However, it matters to all: to younger adults who also need social care and for whom the same principles of good social care apply; to all those who interact with and care about people who may need care and support; and to the whole of our society, since how we support people to have a dignified and hopeful life is a test of how ethical our society is. We all hope to have wellbeing throughout our life, and this Green Paper matters to all of our futures.

There are particular considerations around social care for older people because: they face particular complex needs and situations arising during the life course with its associated changes and transitions; inequalities persist, deepen and widen across the life course; and age discrimination (and its interaction with other areas of inequality) impacts on older people's access to appropriate care and support.¹

Our vision

Our vision for adult social care is that:

All adults and carers have access to quality and effective support when they need it that ensures full and equal citizenship through upholding rights, including the right to independent living. This support should be sustainable and make the best use of resources.

The role of social work

People who experience illness, disability, social and economic barriers to inclusion, loss and bereavement, conflict and difficult relationships or other human issues, need ethical, knowledgeable and skilled support to:

- Understand the unique situation that they face and the impact of this
- Identify the outcomes they want to achieve
- Access the support that will increase their independence and wellbeing.

This is at the heart of social care as it should be.

This skilled help requires professional judgment based on law, evidence and theory. Social care practitioners need to build relationships with people and use the right resources in order to achieve identified outcomes in the most effective way. Social workers are able to offer skilled help in the most complex situations; and to offer leadership, advice and support to other practitioners delivering this responsibility. Social workers work with individuals, families, informal networks and communities.

Social workers have an important role in delivering the principles of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) for people who are not able to make decisions about their care and treatment. Social workers working as Approved Mental Health Professionals, offer a social perspective in Mental Health Act (1983) assessments. Within the context of the Care Act (2014), social workers uphold human rights and safeguard people who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Social workers also offer direct holistic support to help people to manage transitions, loss, change and bereavement. These are all essential contributions to social care at its best.

BASW's Professional Capabilities Frameworkⁱⁱ and specialist Capabilities Statementⁱⁱⁱ for social work with older people, set out social workers' expertise.

A recent research report on the effectiveness of adult social work concluded that social work is effective because of social workers' capabilities, knowledge and ability to provide counselling and ongoing support.^{iv} A research review of social work with older people highlights examples where social workers in integrated services can offer effective care and support including: preventative services to delay admissions to care and maintain health; practical and emotional support to plan ahead so that people with dementia can stay in the community; safe discharge from health services and reduction in readmissions; and prevention of avoidable hospital admissions at end of life.^v

Key messages for the Green Paper

The knowledge, skills and values that inform social work practice, also inform the following important key messages for the Green Paper:

- It should seek to further embed the principles and rights that are set out in law, especially the Human Rights Act (1998), the Care Act (2014), and the Mental Capacity Act (2005).
- It should promote full and equal citizenship for older people through upholding rights, including to independent living (see appendix).
- It should recognise that wellbeing must sit alongside health so that integration delivers both.
- It should recognise the importance of the social model of working with people so that choice and control are increased (see appendix).
- It should recognise the importance of ethical, knowledgeable and skilled support, and social workers' ability to offer this directly to people and support other practitioners to do so.
- It should gather and apply evidence from people with lived experience, from carers, practitioners and academic sources, to inform desirable and feasible proposals.

Social work ethics^{vi} of human rights (promoting dignity and wellbeing, self-determination, attending to the whole person, identifying and building strengths) and social justice (challenging discrimination, recognising diversity, distributing resources and working in solidarity) should be at the heart of adult social care, and all practitioners should aim to uphold these.

The seven principles

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care identified seven principles for the Green Paper in March 2018.^{vii} The remainder of this document sets out what we consider is needed to achieve these, based on the social work perspective on social care. It also highlights what we consider important for the particular role of social work within social care.

There are issues related to funding that are specific to older people, given the different status in terms of income and wealth between older people and working age disabled people. However, the importance of person-centred care that ensures control, holistic support and quality is common to all people in need of care and support. This is what we focus on and this is not age specific.

BASW is the strong, independent voice of social work and social workers. We are committed to strengthening and improving social work practice, and influencing the context so that social workers have the support they need to work well. We will discuss these aims further with BASW members and others, and seek to influence and collaborate to achieve these aims.

“Social workers should keep a sense of hope and optimism and communicate this to others.” (Older people’s feedback for the Capabilities Statement^{viii})

The seven principles are addressed in an order that reflects social workers’ offer and expertise. BASW carried out a brief survey of members to inform this position statement. We received 105 responses within the consultation period.

Control

91% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “the Green Paper needs to address person-centred care for adults and carers that respects their human rights.”

“Social work is instrumental in having this role and...social workers can be a role model for other practitioners within adult social care.” (Survey feedback)

The Secretary of State referred to the need to increase the take up of direct payments, and for greater transparency and information so that people can better direct their care.

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.^{ix}

Whole person, integrated care

89% agreed or strongly agreed that “the Green Paper needs to address joined up health and social work practice.”

“Integration should be around the person, their family and friends and include wider agencies of support.” (Survey feedback)

The Secretary of State set out a plan for the full integration of health and social care around the person, and highlighted the need for joint health and care and support plans.

Integration should be based on respect between social care and health of their different and complementary offers. Integration is, therefore, enhanced by strengthening the identity and integrity of social care. Social care should be regarded as an equal partner with health in the collective pursuit of health and wellbeing. It should be clear how to access social care and health, particularly for marginalised groups. Integration requires effective relationships between professions, agencies and organisations, not just good structures. Different communities should be able to develop their own local solutions to respond to social care, health and other needs. Good joint work requires good communication, and clarity about accountability for services and funding.

- Social workers and other social care practitioners should be able to uphold the social model within their work with other professions and agencies
- Social workers' role and interventions should be respected and supported within integrated services^x
- Social workers in multi-disciplinary settings should have social work professional support through, for example, profession-specific supervision.^{xi}

Quality

83% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “the Green Paper needs to address diversity and anti-oppressive practice for people who use social care services.”

“Social work and social care is about supporting people to live better lives, this cannot happen if provision only has to be adequate.” (Survey feedback)

The Secretary of State said that care must be consistently of high standard across the country.

There needs to be sufficient funding and allocation of resources for sustainable provision, including preventative and public health services. This requires redistribution of resources across the country. People who fund their own care and those who receive statutory funding should have the same quality of social care support. All services must combat oppression such as ageism, which causes barriers to people having the care and support that they need. Diverse provision is needed to reflect the diversity of the population. Innovations should be evaluated for their ethical and practical impact on people.

- Skilled practitioners, including social workers, should continue to be supported to monitor and review the quality of social care services, including responding to safeguarding issues.

Support for families and carers

Survey respondents identified that the areas that people raised as concerns with them most often were: the provision of adequate resources for social care; the quality of care; and joined up health and social care.

The Secretary of State said that the needs of carers will be central to social care and highlighted the importance of combatting loneliness.

Carers should be seen as individuals, and as partners in care and support. The increasing diversity of family and friendship relationships should be recognised. Clarity over access to support and funding arrangements is needed. Social workers are well placed to work with communities to develop local connections and networks that improve wellbeing and use resources well.^{xii}

- Skilled practitioners, including social workers, should continue to support carers and families, particularly in: developing networks and community connections; balancing conflicts and differences of views; and supporting people through change and bereavement.

A sustainable funding model and security for all

91% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that *“the Green Paper needs to address sustainability of funding of care for adults and carers.”*

89% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that *“the Green Paper needs to address the provision of adequate and fair resources in adult social care.”*

The Secretary of State said that there needs to be a sustainable financial system for care and emphasised the importance of developing the best models of care. He also highlighted the principles of shared responsibility and fairness.

In 2017, Age UK estimated nearly 1.2m older people had unmet care needs.^{xiii} In February 2018, the National Audit Office identified that local authorities spent 5.3% less on care in 2016-17 compared with 2010-11. They concluded that the Department of Health and Social Care cannot demonstrate that the sector is sustainably funded.^{xiv} There needs to be sufficient funding for social care to promote full and equal citizenship (see appendix). This has significant cost implications and should be realised in a managed way, using the best evidence and based on public agreement. This must not be postponed or be sacrificed to political interest. Two-tier systems, where different groups receive different quality or accessibility of service, must be avoided. The cumulative effects of inequality across the life-course should be recognised in any discussion about contributing to social care costs. New models of care should be based on the best evidence and well evaluated. Social workers are well placed to identify preventative services that can reduce or delay need for care and support, and to understand the impact of models of care and advise on the development of new ways of working.

- Skilled practitioners' judgements, including social workers', about necessary and sufficient care and support, made in partnership with people who need care and support, should not be compromised by lack of resources
- Skilled practitioners, including social workers, should continue to be supported to work preventatively, to monitor the impact of different models of care and advise on development
- All adults should have access to social worker expertise when they need this.

Respect and nurture the workforce

“Our focus through this green paper should be on the people we serve and how we deliver better social work.” (Survey feedback)

The Secretary of State highlighted that there needs to be enough people within skilled roles to support people to live the best possible lives.

BASW will continue to work with government, service users, carers, employers and others in the sector to ensure recognition and support for social workers so that they can provide evidence-informed, person-centred help. This includes having pay and working conditions that are conducive to good quality work, ongoing learning and development, opportunities for career advancement and time for critical reflection. The social work workforce should be adequate to meet demand. Standards for Employers of social workers^{xv} should be upheld, in particular so that we can support the retention of social workers

- The focus of social work and other skilled practice should be on personalised work with people to promote their wellbeing; bureaucracy and administration should be proportionate to the task of explaining judgements and ensuring accountability for these
- Skilled practitioners, including social workers, should have roles that enable them to offer holistic support, make timely and appropriate judgements which connect people to the right services^{xvi}, and to mentor and support other practitioners.

Appendix

This Position Statement upholds rights for adults based on the following:

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities^{xvii}

The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. (Article 1)

Article 19 - Living independently and being included in the community

States Parties to this Convention recognise the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, including by ensuring that:

- (a) Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement;
- (b) Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;
- (c) Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.

Social Model of Disability

Traditionally, services have tended to work within a deficits model. The social model has a focus on people's strengths and encourages the removal of the barriers that restrict life choices within society, or the reduction of their effects, so that people have choice and control in their lives.

The social model enables disabled people and encourages society to be more inclusive. The social model of disability is the framework for social work practice, whilst recognising that medical issues impact on disabled people and that medical support is important.^{xviii}

Human Rights Approach

“A human rights based approach is about empowering people to know and claim their rights and increasing the ability and accountability of individuals and institutions who are responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling rights. This means giving people greater opportunities to participate in shaping the decisions that impact on their human rights. It also means increasing the ability of those with responsibility for fulfilling rights to recognise and know how to respect those rights, and make sure they can be held to account.

Social work is a human rights profession, which recognises that people may face particular hardships arising from the disregard of their rights, or the particular barriers they may face giving effect to their rights.”^{xix}

ⁱ[Capabilities Statement for Social Work with Older People in England](#) (2017)

ⁱⁱ[Professional Capabilities Framework for Social Work in England](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ[Capabilities Statement for Social Work with Older People in England](#) (2017)

^{iv}Moriarty J and Manthorpe J (2016) [The Effectiveness of Social Work with Adults: A systematic scoping review](#), King's College London

^vMilne A, Sullivan M, Tanner D, Richards S, Ray M, Lloyd L, Beech C and Phillips J (2014) *Social Work with Older People: A Vision for the Future*, The College of Social Work

^{vi} BASW (2012) [The Code of Ethics for Social Work](#)

^{vii} Jeremy Hunt (2018) [“We need to do better on social care”](#), Speech transcript

^{viii}[Capabilities Statement for Social Work with Older People in England](#) (2017)

^{ix}Think Local Act Personal (2016) [Developing a Wellbeing and Strengths-based Approach to Social Work Practice: Changing Culture](#)

^xDepartment of Health (2017) [Social Work: Essential to Integration](#)

^{xi}BASW [Charter for Integrated Working](#) (2016)

^{xii}NDTi (2017) [What works in Community Led Support? First evaluation report](#). Findings and lessons from local approaches and solutions for transforming adult social care (and health) services in England, Wales and Scotland

^{xiii}Care Quality Commission (2017) [State of Care 2016/17](#)

^{xiv}National Audit Office (2018) [The adult social care workforce in England](#)

^{xv}Local Government Association [Standards for employers of social workers in England](#)

^{xvi}Think Local Act Personal (2016) [Developing a Wellbeing and Strengths-based Approach to Social Work Practice: Changing Culture](#)

^{xvii} United Nations [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

^{xviii} Shaping our Lives and BASW (2016) [Disabled Adults and Social Workers: Charter](#)

^{xix} BASW (2015) [Human Rights Policy](#)