



The big picture

The issue of adult social care funding is complex. Our Chief Executive Stephen Hammersley explores what the issues are and how they are being addressed

Why is there an acute need for more funding for adult social care?

The population of the UK is ageing. It is projected that by 2043 24 per cent of the population (that's 17.4 million people) will be made up of those aged over 65 and 13 per cent will be aged over 75. The fact that people are living longer is a cause for celebration. It also means that we need to ensure that any needs, which are likely to increase with age, are properly met. Funding, which is provided at local authority level, has not kept pace with these increasing needs. In 2021, The King's Fund reported that local authorities spent only a little more in real terms in 2019/20 than in 2010/11 despite increased demand.

What is being done to address this?

In Autumn 2021 the government announced plans for a new tax, the Health and Social Care Levy. Part of this levy will be used to provide £5.4 billion for adult social care reform in England over the next three years (2022 to 2025) and the rest will go towards health care. From 2025 onwards the share of the extra tax going to social care should increase.

What will the Health and Social Care Levy be used for?

The levy should be used to help local authorities move towards paying care homes a fair and sustainable rate for the care they provide. Currently local authorities pay less than the full cost of care for those reliant on Government funding. This means that care providers like us must make up the shortfall.

Our sector is also facing huge staff shortages – in August 2021, Skills for Care (the UK's care workforce development agency) reported a shortage of 105,000 workers. The levy should be used to attract people into working in care and encourage them to stay.

A recent BBC Panorama programme examined care homes owned by international investors and asked how much money is being taken out of the system. What is different about the way Pilgrims' Friend Society is funded?

We are a charity. We don't take any cash out of our organisation to pay to shareholders or investors – everything is reinvested in care.

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Are the planned funding reforms going to be enough?

Probably not but it's a step in the right direction. After delays by successive governments the fact these social care reforms are planned is encouraging. However, the reality is the projected



costs of caring for our older population will probably far exceed what this new funding can provide. The National Care Forum estimates addressing the shortfall in social care funding will require a figure close to £7 billion a year. It is planned that after 2025 a higher proportion of the Health and Social Care Levy will be used to fund adult social care, but this would mean diverting it away from the NHS. Given the pressures the NHS is under including the impact the pandemic has had on healthcare provision, there is a question mark over whether this will happen.

Could this have a serious impact on the growing numbers of older people who find themselves in need?

Indeed. Already it's been estimated (by Age Concern) that there are 1.4 million older people in the UK whose needs are not being met. Sadly, unless action is taken that number will only increase and more older people will suffer. As well as health needs, there are many social and spiritual needs that are also going unmet. Loneliness is a huge problem for older people and causal links have been found between a lack of social stimulation and the progression of illness, for example, dementia.

This sounds very bleak...

It does, but as Christians we know we have a God who listens and can change things. May I encourage you to spend some time praying this issue through?

I would also like to share some words of hope. In the face of many challenges, Pilgrims' Friend Society remains committed to investing in high quality care for the older people who choose to make a home with us. We



cannot single-handedly solve the funding pressures in the social care sector, but we can be part of a growing tide of those championing the needs of older people and highlighting the positive contributions that they make to society. As well as supporting those who live with us, I'm also excited about the opportunities we have, in partnership with local Christians, to reach out to and address the needs of older people in the communities around us.

How does Pilgrims' Friend Society hope to reach these older people?

Across our homes, we've been appointing Activities and Community Engagement (ACE) Facilitators who will each recruit and lead a team of volunteers who will enrich the quality of life in our homes and will take what they have learned about being with older people back out to their churches and the surrounding communities.

My prayer is that by developing this programme our homes and schemes will become part of a network of volunteers and churches that create opportunities for fellowship and friendship for many people so that we significantly reduce the burden of loneliness and so that many people come to know Jesus as their Saviour and hope towards the end of their lives.

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I don't live near one of your homes, but I'd like to reach older people in my area. What can I do?

Our sister organisation Faith in Later Life (FiLL) is committed to empowering Christians to reach older people. For more details, see www.faithinlaterlife.org

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