

Time for a national care service

UNISON is calling for a national care service. The UK's response to coronavirus has left too many vulnerable people and the heroes that care for them unprotected. Social care has been the forgotten frontline.

But coronavirus exposed a system already in crisis. Shambolic, fragmented and unaccountable; abandoned by successive governments' dither and delay; left for cowboy companies to squeeze what little funding there is offshore. Our care system was unable to respond to COVID-19 because of the dysfunction that has come to define it. Britain urgently needs a safe, professional, accountable system that works for people not profit. This long-overdue overhaul is now the government's most pressing task.

We cannot let the government slip back to normal. Our care system will not withstand future crises.

A national care service must:

► **Uphold quality standards via a professionalised workforce:** Care is a service delivered by people, for people. Quality and safety standards are linked to the workforce. Care workers are the beating heart of a system that should look after our loved ones with compassion and kindness. Care workers must be valued, recognised and rewarded as skilled professionals.

► **Be based on a system people understand and trust:** We need a care system that is accountable, transparent and integrated. A fragmented, complex system with no secure funding stream or public accountability has served tax haven bank accounts rather than the public. Such a chaotic system will be unable to respond to future health crises.

► **Have sustainable public funding and a public ethos:** An unstable market system has left care in a shambolic state, driven by profit and price, not people. Old age and disability are not an offence; like ill health, their cost should be shared by the community. Yet care remains the poor relation of the NHS. Care should be publicly funded, publicly accountable and delivered for people not profit.

We have 5 demands:

We are calling on government to guarantee immediately:

- All care workers must be paid the **real living wage**, as an absolute minimum.
- All care workers should have a **standard contract**, which includes full sick pay, contracted hours and payment for all hours worked (including travel time and “sleep-ins”).
- Significant, **emergency funding** must reach the care system to ensure the elderly and disabled are protected from COVID-19 and any future crises
- Care needs to be **professionalised**. The Care Certificate should be upgraded and expanded and professional registration should be standardised throughout the UK.

► **Partnership working group** of commissioners, providers, governments and trade unions must be established to action solutions to the well-known problems. The time for political promises is over.

Go to the campaign page to join the fight for your national care service
unison.org.uk/change care