

Briefing

Health and social care integration

About us

Since 1870 the Together Trust has been providing care, support and education services, we support around 2,000 people aged 5 to 25+ each year across 40 different services. We campaign because the people we support tell us they face daily discrimination, hardship and barriers and they want to see change. We champion their rights, needs and ambitions and campaign on the issues that matter to them.

Key messages

- ⇒ Approach to commissioning has led to a division of services that leaves people without the proper pathway of support that they need.
- ⇒ Fragmented budgets across education, health and social care alongside reduced capacity in local authority care management leads to EHCPs that are not reflective of the current needs of a child. This ultimately means that the child does not get the wrap around care they need.
- ⇒ If intervention doesn't take place in early age, it ultimately leads to costly packages of care in adulthood.
- ⇒ Third and voluntary sector not considered equal partners in the health and social care integration but have extensive knowledge and on-the ground experience to co-design solutions.
- ⇒ The pandemic has quite rightly highlighted the role that the social care workforce plays alongside the NHS in holding our society together. But it has shone a light on the disparities in pay between these two essential workforces.

A pathway through children's and adult social care

The transition from children's to adult services can be challenging and upsetting for young people and their families. Changes to education, health and care plans (EHCPs) should mean that there is no hard transition to adult services. But families are reporting that this isn't the case. We want to see the appropriate support agreed years in advance. As well as support for children and young people to say what changes they would like to make to their plans. Everyone should have a voice in their care and the outcomes they want to achieve.

The level of resource for transitions within local authorities has reduced significantly over the years. When a child moves to adult services families find that the discussions and negotiations that took place with children's services have to take place all over again. If intervention doesn't take place in early age, it ultimately leads to costly packages of care in adulthood.

The challenge is to build pathways with the correct resources and infrastructure to produce long term positive change for individuals. This involves a long term policy that enables services to have a relationship from early childhood right up to adulthood so the individual can achieve their goals and dreams and live with the best level of independence for them.

Question to government

With huge reviews and reforms taking place across government can the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Secretary of State for Education guarantee that any recommendations will seek to improve transition between children's and adult social care rather than cause any further challenges?

Fragment budgets

The intention of health and social care integration is to have a holistic package of support but the reality doesn't work out like that. The Together Trust finds that often EHCP's are not up to date. We believe this to be a result of backlogs and capacity within local authorities. Often the funding is incorrect, a young person might only have funding for education and not for health and care. Fragmented budgets across education, health and social care leads to gaps in support. This ultimately means that the child does not get the wrap around care they need.

In a special education setting we need to be empowered to provide support or all the presenting needs of the individual. We have the skills to assess and do all this but we need policy to allow this, with the correct checks and balances in place, to be possible so the correct funding is released and young people's needs can be met.

Question to government

Is there a date when the SEND review report will be published?

Unequal partners in the integration of health and social care

The Together Trust see the greatest challenge with the integration of health and social care as being the alignment of services within a pathway. Along with bringing together very different cultures and organisations such as acute care, NHS, GP networks, community and long- term support, Local Authority Social Care and population public health. The knowledge and experience of the voluntary and third sector is underestimated, as a result, organisations such as ours are not considered equal partners.

At the Together Trust we have multiple services covering education, residential, community, short breaks and wrap around clinical and emotional wellbeing support. We integrate our services around the needs of the people we support, offering a holistic package of care, support and education. We have the ability to wrap support around a child, young person or adult, building resilience and reducing the demands on acute and looked after services.

We can advise on the correct levels of funding to account for the challenges shifting from managing a particular service to managing a pathway of support. However, we are not engaged as experts through experience to help co-design and support the better integration of health and social care. There has to be clear roles and responsibilities for partnership with the voluntary sector, outlined as part of any reforms.

Questions to the government

Will government guarantee that the voluntary and third sector are included as an equal partner in the integration of health and social? Is there cross party commitment to shape and deliver social care reform?

Commissioning and procurement challenges

The relationship with strategic commissioning bodies has improved more recently, there is more equality and mature discussions that support the inter-dependency of provider/commissioner relationships. But more dialogue and engagement is needed in order that sufficiency activities and agendas are based on achievable and person-centred outcomes.

In practice we're not seeing changes in the commissioning process as part of the integration agenda. Over the past 5 to 10 years lots of services have been commissioned through CCG to the third sector. This approach to commissioning has resulted in a fragmentation of services

with pockets of delivery happening, rather than a proper pathway through health and social care.

There will always be huge complexity in the reality of working out what's best for each individual but what 'the whole system' needs is a decisive sense of future direction and that requires a) national oversight, public investment and direction-setting and b) a long-term view/strategy to get from where we are now to where we'd rather be.

Questions to the government

When will we start to see changes as part of the commissioning process, and if so will we be given clear timelines?

Social care workforce

Many of our staff moved into our residential homes at the height of the pandemic so they could continue to care for the people we support demonstrating a huge commitment and dedication to their work. Our staff did and continue to put the needs of the people we support ahead of their own, and that of their families.

The pandemic has quite rightly highlighted the role that the social care workforce plays alongside the NHS in holding our society together. But it has shone a light on the disparities in pay between these two essential workforces.

Around 2.6million people work in frontline care, but data shows that around a quarter of that workforce are on a zero hour contract¹ and the Resolution Think Tank found that approximately 50% of that workforce are paid less than the living wage².

As a rights-based charity we strive to create equitable opportunities for our employees and invest into career progression opportunities and

¹ <https://www.acevo.org.uk/2020/09/letter-to-helen-whately-minister-for-care/>

² <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/what-happens-after-the-clapping-finishes>

succession planning. In 2018 we completed a major change programme to ensure our colleagues have equitable pay and we do not pay below the Real Living Wage. So it was welcomed to see the recommendations from the Social Care Taskforce Workforce Advisory group into an urgent review to look towards implementing a career based pay and reward scheme for social care³.

Question to the government

Will the government invest in our social care workforce to create parity with the NHS?

³https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/919164/8_Workforce_Advisory_Group_report_accessible.pdf

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