



Risk control

The Viability of Care Homes



In partnership with



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Overview

In its most recent report, the Care Quality Commission (CQC)¹ described enduring issues within the health and care system that had been reported upon within previous issues.

Significant challenges remain within areas such as:

— Primary and community care

An increasing number of individuals are finding it difficult to secure appointments with a GP, while the number of people registered with a GP has also risen.

— Adult social care

The demand for social care is steadily rising, particularly for individuals discharged from hospitals. However, the availability of services has not consistently matched this demand, resulting in more people not receiving the necessary support.

— Mental health

The demand for adult mental health services is on the rise, and this increase is even more pronounced among children and young people, with a growing number seeking care and support for their mental health.

— Secondary care

The high demand for services and persistent pressure throughout the system are causing many individuals, including children, to miss out on timely care. This situation is contributing to the worsening of health conditions, necessitating more intensive support and treatment, and leading to extended hospital stays.

— Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

A significant number of individuals are experiencing prolonged waits for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) authorisations, despite numerous efforts by local authorities to minimize backlogs and achieve sustainable improvements.

— Local system response

Integrated care boards face major challenges, including finance, joint forward planning, and workforce depletion, as individuals encounter difficulties in accessing the care they require.

— Areas of specific concern

- Too many women are still not receiving the high-quality maternity care they deserve

- There are concerns that children and young people are not always able to access services in a timely way – both planned and in an emergency
- The number of health visitors, who give individual support for young children and their parents, has declined by 45% over the last 9 years
- Only around a quarter of people with a learning disability were recorded on the learning disability register, which means that many people are missing out on the proactive care and treatment they are entitled to
- Despite fewer new referrals for autism diagnoses over 2023/24, the average waiting time to start an assessment reached a peak of nearly a year (328 days) in April 2024, rather than the recommended 3 months
- People in Black or Black British ethnic groups are over 3 and a half times more likely to be detained under the Mental Health Act than people in white ethnic groups.

Concerns about the health and care workforce were previously identified within a House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee Report (2022) which suggested that “the National Health Service and the social care sector are facing the greatest workforce crisis in their history.”²

Funding is also a significant issue. A report published by national learning disability charity Hft and Care England focused upon the finances and workforce in the adult social care sector in 2024. The report described the financial position of the adult social care sector:

“Faced with ongoing and systemic challenges, compounded by an ageing population, increasing demand for support, a limited workforce supply, and persistent underfunding, adult social care providers are continuing to operate in “survival-mode”: sprinting just to stay afloat, being forced to make difficult decisions to survive.”³

The report further described the actions of those organisations surveyed in responding to the continuing financial pressures:

- Over two-thirds of providers sought internal efficiency savings
- 3 in 10 closed parts of their organisation or handed back care contracts
- One-third of providers curbed investment

Key Recommendations

There are several critical activities that Local Authorities must undertake, to fulfil their duty of care. These include:

- Oversight of the financial viability of care home providers
- Financial oversight arrangements are augmented by working with other Local Authorities to annually monitor the financial viability of the service providers
- Independent monitoring of the standard of care
- Care home managers ensure staff are sufficiently trained to provide appropriate levels of care
- Care home providers produce timely information and bills to residents
- Owners and operators demonstrate a drive for continued improvements in care standards

The Care Act Statutory Guidance⁶ places a duty on the Local Authority in arranging and funding of social care in the authority's area of responsibility.

Local Authorities should continue to develop plans that will prevent or mitigate potential for disruptions to social care provision.

Conclusion

Clearly the health and care system is still under a great deal of pressure to deliver much needed services to those who most need them, with little respite to look forward to in the immediate future. The pressures come in many forms, including significant funding issues, increasing demands for service, and continuing challenges to recruit and retain staff.

Local Authorities must persevere in their commitment to overcome these challenges to offer the care that people require. Authorities should continue to find innovative and creative solutions where possible, whilst also considering and developing contingency plans should existing care providers fail or exist the market.

References

- 1 Care Quality Commission, State of Care 2023/24, available at: <https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/major-report/state-care>
- 2 UK Parliament, Workforce: recruitment, training and retention in health and social care, available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5803/cmselect/cmhealth/1115/report.html>
- 3 Hft and Care England, Sector Pulse Check, available at: <https://www.hft.org.uk/get-involved/public-affairs-policy-and-campaigns-sector-pulse-check/>
- 4 Department for Health and Social Care, Care and support statutory guidance, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>

Further information

For access to further RMP Resources you may find helpful in reducing your organisation's cost of risk, please access the RMP Resources or RMP Articles pages on our website. To join the debate follow us on our LinkedIn page.

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