

# Voluntary Organisations Disability Group Representation to HM Treasury on the Comprehensive Spending Review

**September 2020**

## About VODG

VODG is the national infrastructure body representing organisations within the voluntary sector who work alongside disabled people. Our members' work is focused on enabling disabled people of all ages to live the lives they choose. VODG believes that an ambitious, trusted and vibrant voluntary sector that works together plays a unique role in achieving this aim. VODG members work with around a million disabled people, employ more than 85,000 staff and have a combined annual turnover in excess of £2.8 billion.

VODG welcomes the opportunity to submit this representation to HM Treasury on the spending review. This submission is informed by engagement with our member organisations and we recognise and endorse the individual submissions being made by our member and our other key stakeholders. We use this paper to draw out those issues most relevant to disability, care and support providers and the people they support.


## 1. Introduction

Chancellor Rishi Sunak has stated that the Comprehensive Spending Review 2020 (CSR) is an opportunity for the government to deliver on the third phase of its recovery plan and "honour the commitments made in the March Budget to rebuild, level up and invest in people and places spreading opportunities more evenly across the nation."<sup>1</sup>

As it prioritises its vision for the UK's economic recovery from COVID-19, the Treasury must include as a central focus, plans to prioritise disabled people and build an inclusive society for all.

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<sup>1</sup> HM Treasury (2020) *Chancellor launches Comprehensive Spending Review*.  
[www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-launches-comprehensive-spending-review](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-launches-comprehensive-spending-review)



There are 14.1 million disabled people in the UK, representing 21% of the population and 19% of working age adults.<sup>2</sup> In England, 21% of the population reports having a disability. The provision of essential services to disabled people in ways that promote independence, choice and control, as well as supporting their carers is a statutory obligation. The hallmark of a fair and equitable society includes fully meeting people's needs and enabling disabled people to have full choice and control over their lives, and to be included in society. In the long term, this can reduce inequality, injustice and save public money.<sup>3</sup> The provision of support for people with life-long disabilities will span a number of policy areas, including: education, particularly special education needs and disability (SEND), adult social care, mental health, employment, and welfare.

In setting out its future spending, the Treasury must work across government departments and fund policies that support and empower disabled people across the entire life course – throughout childhood, into and throughout adulthood and into old age. Such policies must be strongly interconnected across all relevant departments and be person-centred – as must be the funding that sits behind each policy.

VODG believes the Treasury must pledge three commitments in this year's CSR:

1. Invest in disabled people to live more independently by funding policies that enables disabled people's needs throughout transitions in their life to be fully met – from childhood, throughout adulthood and into older age.
2. Invest in disabled people's services, and their communities, and the infrastructure supporting local services.
3. Tackle unmet need and inequalities and level up provision of services for disabled people.


In order to fulfil these commitments, VODG believes the government needs to:

1. Fund a fully inclusive industrial approach and strategy as the driver for inclusive economic reform.
2. Properly fund public services, including social care, employment support, and invest in the voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to enable local community and services to all play their role.

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<sup>2</sup> Department for Work and Pensions (2020) *Family Resources Survey*.  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/874507/family-resources-survey-2018-19.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874507/family-resources-survey-2018-19.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Public Health England (2014) *Local action on health inequalities: evidence papers*. Accessed:  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-action-on-health-inequalities-evidence-papers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-action-on-health-inequalities-evidence-papers)

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- 3. Lift disability services out of the low pay sector and ensure that services for disabled people are funded well above the national minimum wage.
  - 4. Fund the creation of a national disability strategy as matter of urgency.

## **2. Invest in disabled people to live more independently**

The total number of people reporting a disability in the UK is increasing, up from 19% in 2008/09. The main drivers for this rise have been increases in the number of working age adults and children reporting a disability.<sup>4</sup>

With an increasing number of children living with a disability, proper investment in supporting young disabled people to move – or transition – from children’s to adults’ services is crucial to avoiding gaps in support and therefore avoiding greater financial pressures on adult social care services at a later date. Studies have evidenced that poorer transition outcomes for young people with learning disabilities compared with those without, with research demonstrating that individuals in this group are less likely to be employed, to live independently or to experience community participation than their non-disabled counterpart.<sup>5</sup> Such outcomes come at a cost to the public purse. Investing upstream in prevention and early intervention will save public money.

As the government focuses on the post-pandemic economic recovery, VODG would urge the government to re-examine the current Industrial Strategy<sup>6</sup>, which to date has completely overlooked the contribution disabled people, and the sectors that support disabled people, make to the economy. If the aim of the Industrial Strategy is to encourage the growth of a more productive and sustainable economy, then, now more than ever, it is vital for the government to focus on increasing the number of disabled people in employment, which evidence suggests can lead to benefits for both the individual and the wider economy.


Disabled people are significant contributors to the UK economy both in terms of their spending power but also as employees and taxpayers, and when commissioning their own services.

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<sup>4</sup> Department for Work and Pensions (2020) *Family Resources Survey*. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/874507/family-resources-survey-2018-19.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874507/family-resources-survey-2018-19.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Allcock, A (2018) *ESSS Outline: Mental health of young people with learning disabilities in transition*. Iriss. <https://doi.org/10.31583/esss.20181217>

<sup>6</sup> GOV.UK (2017) *The UK’s Industrial Strategy*. [www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/the-uks-industrial-strategy](http://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/the-uks-industrial-strategy)



In November 2017, the government set out its 10-year plan for getting a million more disabled people into employment by 2027 in the Improving lives: the future of work, health and disability White Paper. It set out a strategy based on supporting disabled people to find work while providing investment to support these people to stay in employment. The government reported that finding work for an additional 1% of eligible Employment and Support Allowance claimants in 2018/19 would save the Treasury £240 million and provide a boost to the economy of £260 million.<sup>7</sup>

The impact of COVID-19 on the economy will have undoubtedly shifted the figures but the strategy to increase the number of disabled people in employment must remain so that the benefits can continue to be reaped. To overlook the contribution of disabled people to the economy would be incredibly short-sighted. The spending power of disabled people and their household is estimated to be worth £249 billion per year to UK business.<sup>8</sup> Earlier government investment in policies aimed at increasing the number of disabled people into work have seen progress, but more still needs to be done.

Today, the disability employment gap stands as 28.1% - a reduction of 0.8 percentage points in the last year.<sup>9</sup> In April to June 2020, 4.1 million, or 53.6% of disabled people were in employment compared to 81.7% of non-disabled people. Less than a fifth of people with learning difficulties as their main health condition were in employment.<sup>10</sup>

Disabled people can face challenges in the workplace and the COVID-19 pandemic could bring further additional challenges and barriers for disabled people at work. To ensure inclusive economic development, it is important that the government continues to invest in policies that support disabled people to start and stay in employment as well as support to employers to offer and maintain inclusive workplaces.


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<sup>7</sup> Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Health (2017) *Improving lives. The future of work, health and disability*. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/663399/improving-lives-the-future-of-work-health-and-disability.PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/663399/improving-lives-the-future-of-work-health-and-disability.PDF)

<sup>8</sup> Purple (2017) *The Purple Pound*. <https://wearepurple.org.uk/the-purple-pound-infographic/#:~:text=The%20Purple%20Pound%20refers%20to,the%20members%20has%20a%20disability.&text=75%25%20%E2%80%93%2075%25%20of%20disabled,poor%20accessibility%20or%20customer%20service.>

<sup>9</sup> House of Commons Library (2020) *Disabled People in Employment* <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7540/>

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*



In 2018/19, the government spent £129 million on Access to Work provision<sup>11</sup>, which exists to help people who are disabled or have a physical or mental health condition to stay in employment. Yet, 288,000 disabled people are unemployed, an unemployment rate of 6.5% (compared to 3.5% for people who are not disabled).<sup>12</sup>

Although the Access to Work scheme was last month extended to support people with a disability working from home or in the workplace, a more long-term, wide-ranging approach is needed. This needs to be urgently addressed through an inclusive Industrial Strategy that includes explicit consideration of disabled people. A national system for disability support, embedded within an Industrial Strategy will ensure that disabled people's care needs are met, and when people are able to work there are employment solutions and opportunities as appropriate.

### **3. Invest in the services supporting disabled people**

The provision of essential care and support services to people with life-long disabilities is the hallmark of an equitable society that supports and protects its citizens. This must be rooted in a robust and sustainable social care system that has embedded within it, investment and support for voluntary sector service provision. Behind the provision of care and support services is a workforce that each day is supporting disabled people to live independent lives and the contribution of this workforce must be recognised in a fair and equitable system of reward. The investment in such policies will lead to public funds being saved over the long term.

#### **The reform of adult social care**


The reform of social care, notably the need for a sustainable and long-term funding solution, is long overdue. Years of sustained political failure to fully recognise and understand the necessity of equitable care and support services, alongside the long-standing failure to address the lack of funding for the sector, means that the system was already in an extremely precarious position before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Ultimately, for far too long, the social care sector has not been recognised for the vital contribution it makes to our society.

Funding social care is investing in society and its citizens. It is essential that the Chancellor puts investment for social care reform at the heart of this Comprehensive Spending Review, providing a sustainable settlement for the system so that disabled

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<sup>11</sup> House of Commons Library (2020) 'Access to Work' scheme for disabled people.  
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06666/>

<sup>12</sup> House of Commons Library (2020) *Disabled People in Employment*  
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7540/>



people are able to receive the support they need to live independently over their life course.

Adult social care in England was chronically underfunded prior to the onset of the pandemic and in urgent need of reform. This is despite adult social care employers contributing £38.5 billion to the English economy.<sup>13</sup> The local government finance settlement, announced at the 2019 Spending Round and which included £1 billion in grants for adult and children's social care, was welcome. It will not, however, reverse the significant cuts being made to social care budgets for more than a decade and which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about additional and significant financial pressures for the sector as well magnifying long-standing systemic issues that are in urgent need of address. Consequently, additional funding is required from central government to support the sector's immediate response to the pandemic, over and above what has already been committed, as well as strengthen long-term financial sustainability for the sector and facilitate system reform.

Our ageing and growing population means that there is an increasing need and demand for social care for disabled people and for older people. Research predicts there will be an additional 261,000 working age adults with a mobility, visual or hearing disability and an additional 6,855 working age adults with a learning disability by 2025.<sup>14</sup> The population is also ageing, with the number of people over the age of 65 in England expected to increase by 1.2 million (11%) from 2019 to 2025.<sup>15</sup>

The greatest pressures in the social care system is delivering care and support for working age adults, which accounts for 64% of the demographic pressures on adult social care budgets (including 38% relating to services for people with a learning disability), compared to 58% in 2019/20. Older people's services account for 36%.<sup>16</sup> In 2018/19, total expenditure on social care by councils was £22.2 billion, but expenditure is still below the 2010/11 level, and it does not reflect the increases in

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<sup>13</sup> ICF Consulting Ltd (2018) *The economic value of the adult social care sector in England*. [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/About/sfcd/Economic-value-of-the-adult-social-care-sector-England.pdf](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/About/sfcd/Economic-value-of-the-adult-social-care-sector-England.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information (online) LD – Baseline estimates and Moderate or serious physical disability. [www.pansi.org.uk](http://www.pansi.org.uk)

<sup>15</sup> Projecting Older People Population Information System (online) Population by age. [www.poppi.org.uk](http://www.poppi.org.uk)

<sup>16</sup> Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) (2020) *Budget Survey 2020*. [www.adass.org.uk/media/7973/no-embargo-adass-budget-survey-report.pdf](http://www.adass.org.uk/media/7973/no-embargo-adass-budget-survey-report.pdf)





population and levels of demand.<sup>17</sup> It is estimated that £520million of additional funding is needed to meet the same level of needs in 2020/21, compared to 2019/20.

Compounding all of these factors, is the impact of COVID-19, of which the severity of the financial impact is still unknown. It is estimated that the social care funding gap, without taking into account the cost pressures resulting from COVID-19 nor the cost of social care reform, could be between £2.1 billion and £12.2 billion by 2023/24<sup>18</sup> The cost of meeting increasing demand for services and increasing pay of the adult social care workforce alone could amount to £3.9 billion.<sup>19</sup>

The impact of the government's failure to adequately address the current financial pressures in the system is reaching a tipping point. There has been a significant reduction in confidence among directors of adult social services in meeting their statutory duties relating to adult social care - only 4% of directors are fully confident that their budget will be sufficient to enable them to do so; compared to 35% in 2019/20.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, increasing levels of unmet need have been exacerbated by the pandemic with just under a half of directors of adult social services indicating an increase in unmet need since March 2020. 11% reported an increase of 6-10%.<sup>21</sup>

The increased costs associated in dealing with the pandemic, alongside the long-standing underinvestment in the sector by central government, means many of the vital care and support services that enable people to live fulfilling and independent lives are under threat, and this will have a direct impact on the lives of disabled people as well as knock-on effect on other public services.

The funding provided to local authorities from central government in the form of the temporary and one-off £3.2 billion Emergency Funding and subsequent Infection Control Fund, which was aimed at alleviating the financial pressures faced by local authorities during the pandemic, has simply not been enough and falls significantly

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<sup>17</sup> The King's Fund (2020) *Social care 360: expenditure*. [www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/social-care-360/expenditure](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/social-care-360/expenditure)

<sup>18</sup> The Health Foundation (2020) *The social care funding gap – our updated estimates and figures explained*. [www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/charts-and-infographics/social-care-funding-gap](http://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/charts-and-infographics/social-care-funding-gap)

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> ADASS (2020) *Budget Survey 2020*. [www.adass.org.uk/media/7973/no-embargo-adass-budget-survey-report.pdf](http://www.adass.org.uk/media/7973/no-embargo-adass-budget-survey-report.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> ADASS (2020) *Coronavirus Survey Report 2020*. [www.adass.org.uk/media/7967/adass-coronavirus-survey-report-2020-no-embargo.pdf](http://www.adass.org.uk/media/7967/adass-coronavirus-survey-report-2020-no-embargo.pdf)



■ short of what is needed to address the immediate funding gap as well as look to the future of social care.

The funding of social care is a long story of sustained political failure to invest. The government has in its power the potential to rebuild a sustainable social care system that prioritises solutions that work for everyone. The pandemic, as well as the workforce implications resulting from a new immigration system and the UK's exit from the European Union, requires the government to urgently set out not just how it will reform the sector, but how it will put it on a sustainable financial footing – and where that money will come from.

## **Workforce**

The onset of the pandemic has shone a bright light on the valuable work that social care workers and their organisations carry out across the country to support people in vulnerable circumstances each and every day. Furthermore, an outpouring of support for the health and welfare of citizens ensued. This heightened understanding of, and support for, social care cannot be overlooked.

Delivered by over 1.5 million people<sup>22</sup>, social care services are a lifeline for many disabled people. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to wider public recognition of the social care workforce and as care services lead the way and respond to the challenges brought about by the pandemic, now is the time to raise the status of those working in the sector and of the services supporting older and disabled people.

Every day, social care services provide state-funded care and support to nearly 1.1 million people across the UK in care homes, supported living and in their own homes.<sup>23</sup> The number of adult social care jobs in England as at 2019/20 was estimated at 1.65 million.<sup>24</sup> Social care is a large and growing workforce but high staff vacancy and turnover rates remain – and the pandemic has not relieved such pressures. In March 2020, 34% of 211 providers reported urgently needing more staff with a further 42% anticipating they'd need more staff in the coming months.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Skills for Care (2020) *The size and structure of the adult social care workforce in England, 2020*. [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/documents/Size-of-the-adult-social-care-sector/Size-and-Structure-2020.pdf](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/documents/Size-of-the-adult-social-care-sector/Size-and-Structure-2020.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Nuffield Trust (2020) *Responding to covid-19: the complexities of the social care provider market*. [www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/news-item/responding-to-covid-19-the-underlying-complexities-of-the-social-care-provider-market](http://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/news-item/responding-to-covid-19-the-underlying-complexities-of-the-social-care-provider-market)

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Skills for Care (2020) *COVID-19 Survey*. [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/publications/Topics/COVID-19/COVID-19-survey.aspx](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/publications/Topics/COVID-19/COVID-19-survey.aspx)





Two months later in May 2020, the picture remained the same with 33% of providers experiencing recruitment difficulties.<sup>26</sup>

At a time when the UK is now officially in its first technical recession since 2009<sup>27</sup>, and with the number of people in work having fallen by 220,000<sup>28</sup>, more needs to be done to make social care an attractive career and the current situation could be used to ease workforce pressures. Crucially the sector needs funding to ensure staff that have been recruited from other industries are retained in the social care sector over the long-term. Many care providers have indicated that a career in social care is not valued the same as a career in the NHS, and that this is contributing to the difficulty in recruiting staff.<sup>29</sup>

The current economic crisis is bringing some short-term relief to vacancy rates<sup>30</sup> within the sector as more people search for work and turn to the social care sector for employment. If we are to improve retention rates over the long term, then workforce pay and conditions must be improved so that job seekers see social care as not only a fulfilling career but also one that is financially rewarding. The bedrock to fairly delivered social care services has to be fair pay.

## Fair pay

Increases to the national living wage (NLW) and national minimum wages (NMW), including the 6.2% uplift announced in 2019, have, in principle, always been warmly welcomed by providers. Social care is a labour-intensive sector and the workforce should be recognised for the essential work they carry out. Indeed, given the impact care staff and the services they provide have on the lives of disabled people, the

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<sup>26</sup> Skills for Care (2020) *Recruitment and retention – monthly tracking*. [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/publications/Topics/COVID-19/Recruitment-and-retention.aspx](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/publications/Topics/COVID-19/Recruitment-and-retention.aspx)

<sup>27</sup> Office for National Statistics (2020) *Coronavirus and the impact on output in the UK economy June: 2020*. [www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/articles/coronavirusandtheimpactonoutputintheuk/economy/june2020](http://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/articles/coronavirusandtheimpactonoutputintheuk/economy/june2020)

<sup>28</sup> Office for National Statistics (2020) *Labour market overview, UK: August 2020*. [www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/august2020](http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/august2020)

<sup>29</sup> Hft (2018) *Sector Pulse Check: The impact of the changes to the social care sector in 2018*. [www.hft.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Hft-Sector-Pulse-Check-2018.pdf](http://www.hft.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Hft-Sector-Pulse-Check-2018.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> The King's Fund (2020) *How covid-19 has magnified some of social care's key problems*. [www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/covid-19-magnified-social-care-problems](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/covid-19-magnified-social-care-problems)



government should actively seek out solutions that lift disability services out of the low pay sector.

Local authorities expect to spend an additional £1.6 billion between April 2018 and March 2021 on meeting the costs of NLW and NMW increases, and this figure does not take into account the impact of COVID-19.<sup>31</sup> Increases to the NLW and NMWs need to be properly funded by central government. Furthermore, the implementation of increases must ensure that monies secured to pay for the NLW is cascaded straight to the frontline workforce as reflected in increases in fees paid to social care providers.

Better staff pay without more funding to pay for it will create fresh problems for the sector's employers. In addition to the NLW and NMW increases outlined above, further costs such as pensions must also be covered. The pandemic has also brought with it a series of new financial challenges. Providers face additional costs of more than £6 billion as a result of COVID-19 including workforce costs such as PPE, cleaning and additional staffing.<sup>32</sup> These are costs that will need to be met over the long-term.

While fair and sustainable NLW and NMWs represent an important step towards securing a sustainable workforce, helping to address the recruitment and retention challenges faced across the sector, they also represent significant, unfunded cost pressures for providers, particularly voluntary sector providers which do not recoup these costs through the local authority fees paid to them.

### **Supreme Court judgment on sleep in payments**


At the time of writing, the sector awaits a Supreme Court judgement on sleep in payments. In the Royal Mencap Society vs Tomlinson-Blake case, the Court will decide the issue of whether social care staff who undertake sleep in shifts are entitled to the NMW for all hours spent overnight at their place of work.

If the Supreme Court rules that workers should have been paid the NMW for the whole of their 'sleep in' shift, social care providers could face back pay liabilities for six years or possibly longer. It is estimated that across the sector, this could be as high as £500 million. The impact of this on the sector could be catastrophic – for

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<sup>31</sup> ADASS (2020) *Budget Survey 2020*. [www.adass.org.uk/media/7973/no-embargo-adass-budget-survey-report.pdf](http://www.adass.org.uk/media/7973/no-embargo-adass-budget-survey-report.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Local Government Association (2020) *LGA: social care providers face more than £6bn in extra COVID-19 costs*. [www.local.gov.uk/lga-social-care-providers-face-more-ps6bn-extra-covid-19-costs](http://www.local.gov.uk/lga-social-care-providers-face-more-ps6bn-extra-covid-19-costs)



disabled people who need overnight support and the providers of their services. In this scenario, the government must fund retrospective and ongoing higher costs providers will face with genuinely new money given existing cost pressures.

Conversely, if the Supreme Court upholds a 2018 Court of Appeal ruling, that the NMW does not apply, how overnight support is paid and funded will remain unregulated and inconsistent and care workers will continue to face a postcode lottery determined by local commissioning practices. Some local authorities have increased funding to allow more providers to pay the NMW for sleep ins – although it remains an inconsistent picture with some later reversing those increases. The government has not provided any extra funding to local authorities to cover those costs.

### **The VCSE sector: an integral part of the solution**


Now more than ever we need robust investment from central government to sit alongside strong local leadership to work hand in hand with the voluntary sector. Voluntary sector disability organisations are at the heart of the communities they support and their contribution to society is significant. As providers of not-for-profit care and support services, they predominantly serve people who rely on the state to pay for their care. They have a track record of innovation and enterprise and are an integral part of the solution to improving outcomes in public services. Investing in the voluntary sector also means investing in, and keeping money invested in, local communities. One such example is NHS England and NHS Improvement's work to re-provide care for disabled people, and those suffering ill-health, out of expensive long-stay hospitals and into their own homes supporting by local community services. By partnering with the voluntary sector to build community provision and move people out of long-stay hospitals, the government can move away from expensive and outdated forms of care, and save public funds.

Despite the vital work they carry out, voluntary sector providers are disproportionately affected by the reductions in adult social care budgets<sup>33</sup> yet they provide 320,000 or 20% of adult social care jobs<sup>34</sup>. Without adequate funding for their services, nor a long-term sustainable funding plan, voluntary sector providers, and the care and support they provide to disabled adults, are increasingly at risk of being pulled back. This is even more applicable in the COVID-19 landscape, yet their expertise and good practice is essential in responding to and recovering from the

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<sup>33</sup> Competition and Markets Authority (2017) *Care home markets study*. [www.gov.uk/cma-cases/care-homes-market-study](http://www.gov.uk/cma-cases/care-homes-market-study)

<sup>34</sup> Skills for Care (2020) *The size and structure of the adult social care workforce in England, 2020*. [www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/documents/Size-of-the-adult-social-care-sector/Size-and-Structure-2020.pdf](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/documents/Size-of-the-adult-social-care-sector/Size-and-Structure-2020.pdf)



pandemic. Fees paid by local authorities to voluntary disability organisations have not kept pace with the costs of delivering care and many providers are questioning how long services can continue without a clear direction in their funding.

The £3.2 billion of emergency funding provided by the government to local authorities has not automatically meant increased funding for social care services, or an increase in fees to voluntary sector providers to alleviate some of the recent cost pressures. They have been competing demands from other local services under pressure and the funding has not consistently reached frontline disability services.

Furthermore, any additional funding that does reach providers is expected to go on managing their immediate response to the pandemic rather than improving and expanding access to care and support. These additional costs and the precarious financial outlook with no clarity over budgets for 2020/21 means that for some providers the likelihood of having to hand back contracts or going out of business completely is increased, the impact of which will be felt by disabled people and their families.

It is essential that voluntary sector disability organisations can continue to thrive and carry out the innovative work for which they are recognised so that disabled people, some of whom have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, can lead fulfilling lives.


Even before the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, voluntary sector providers were increasingly coming under strain because of poor public sector commissioning, which has been focussed on markets, competitive tendering and low-cost contracting instead of quality provision delivered at a fair rate. This is now being exacerbated given the additional funding pressures on local authorities. In order to prevent voluntary sector providers handing back contracts or ceasing trading altogether as a result of the challenges involved in trying to deliver services for ever lower priced contracts, the government needs to invest in supporting local authorities to strengthen local partnerships and collaborative working with the voluntary sector via improved commissioning practices such as collusive tendering and relational partnerships.

#### **4. Tackle unmet need and inequality**

In addition to addressing inequalities in employment rates, as noted in section two above, health outcomes can be poorer for disabled people. People with learning disabilities, for example, die prematurely and from treatable causes of death.<sup>35</sup> The

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<sup>35</sup> University of Bristol (2020) *LeDeR 2019 Annual Report*. [www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2020/july/leder-report.html](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2020/july/leder-report.html)



poverty rate for people in a family with disabled family members is also higher than the rate for people in a family with no disabled family members – 30% vs 19%.<sup>36</sup>

In April 2020, it was announced that the Cabinet Office's Disability Unit would work with disability organisations and charities to develop and publish a National Strategy for Disabled People before the end of 2020, which would focus on practical changes to put fairness at the heart of government work, level up opportunity, remove barriers and increase participation. These plans have been delayed<sup>37</sup> due to the pandemic but VODG would urge the government to revisit the creation of this strategy as a matter of urgency to address long standing inequalities that exist for disabled people across a number of areas.

## 5. Conclusion

The impact of the pandemic on disabled people and their families is far-reaching and stretches across all aspects of life from accessing every-day care and support to employment to end of life care. The pandemic has significantly affected the landscape in which voluntary sector disability organisations providers operate, from the workforce required to deliver services to the funding needed to fulfil statutory service provision. The stark reality is that unmet need is on the rise, and this will be further exacerbated by the ongoing impact of COVID-19, the UK's exit from the EU and a new immigration system, and rising levels of poverty – if effective, and fully funded, policy interventions are not sought.

As it turns its attention to formulating solutions to enable strengthen the UK's economic recovery from the pandemic, as well as improve outcomes in public services, the government is afforded an opportunity to deliver a new settlement that finally puts care for disabled people on a stable footing for the long-term.

If there is one area where the government could make a step up, that successive governments, of all parties, have been unable to do, then it would be to put in place a sustainable care and support system for disabled and older people. Across the country, care and support needs are growing and can no longer be managed by short-term, quick-fix, funding solutions. Significant political will is required to implement an effective solution. However, to do so will leave an enduring legacy, lasting for many generations to come.

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<sup>36</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2017) *Poverty rates in families with a disabled person*. [www.jrf.org.uk/data/poverty-rates-families-disabled-person](http://www.jrf.org.uk/data/poverty-rates-families-disabled-person)

<sup>37</sup> GOV.UK (2020) *A National Strategy for Disabled People to remove barriers and increase participation*. [www.gov.uk/government/news/a-national-strategy-for-disabled-people-to-remove-barriers-and-increase-participation](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/a-national-strategy-for-disabled-people-to-remove-barriers-and-increase-participation)