



VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS DISABILITY GROUP: WRITTEN RESPONSE TO INQUIRY INTO THE STATUS OF EU NATIONALS IN THE UK

KEY MESSAGES

- The immigration status of EU nationals is critical for the future of the social care sector, market and those accessing services.
- EU nationals are a crucial part of the social care workforce, with an estimated 80,000 currently working in care and support services in England.
- The social care sector is already facing a workforce crisis, with a predicted 400,000 jobs required by 2035. The workforce challenges that voluntary disability organisations have been experiencing in the face of increased demand and diminishing resources will be drastically exacerbated.
- Changes to the immigration status of EU nationals, as well as the debate and uncertainty around the topic, are likely to have an extremely detrimental effect on the retention and supply of the future workforce.
- The social care sector is dependent on public funding; any wider economic faltering arising from changes is likely to have a detrimental impact on the sector.

1. About VODG

VODG (Voluntary Organisations Disability Group) represents over 80 leading voluntary and charity social care and disability organisations. Our members work with around a million disabled people, employ more than 85,000 staff and have a combined annual turnover in excess of £2.5 billion. Though diverse in terms of their size, history and individual strategies, our member organisations share common values and a collective vision of full choice and control for disabled people. (See Box 1: the context within which voluntary disability organisations work.)

VODG welcomes the opportunity to submit this representation to British Futures. We use this short paper to highlight the issues our members have identified as being especially relevant to disability, care and support provision.

2. Key issues post-Brexit

Immediately after the EU referendum result VODG undertook an assessment of its members to identify key issues and risks for providers. The analysis identified the following issues:

- **Workforce supply** – retention of staff and securing future supply, especially in workforce groups already under strain (e.g. nurses). Dissatisfaction with the UK labour market and a risk that EU workers will



feel less valued, and the implications of changes to immigration regulations.

- **Austerity and funding** – the social care sector is chronically underfunded, facing a £3.3 billion deficit. VODG members are dependent on public sector funding as the majority of support is provided to people with life long conditions. Any further funding and expenditure cuts following the break could leave an already under-funded sector in deeper crisis.
- **EU funding** – has helped with particular groups (e.g. disabled people and the unemployed) as well as for research and development. UK charities received over £200million from EU funding in 2014 – a funding pot they will no longer have access to in the future and alternative strategies are required.
- **Distraction and chaos** – with a sector already in crisis the post-Brexit process risks detracting policy makers from a host of domestic implementation issues.
- **Human rights** – the human rights agenda and progressive approaches to supporting disabled people may be reined in further.
- **Community cohesion** – we may see an increase in discrimination against disabled people and across other parts of the community.

3. Focus on migrant issues

Social care providers have been struggling with the challenges of securing the right workforce and enough staff, particularly in the face of increased demand and austerity measures placed on the sector. These challenges are outlined in in a recent VODG report on securing the future workforce.¹

The question on the immigration status of EU nationals has big implications for the future sustainability of the sector. Any restriction on immigration is likely to have an exceptionally negative impact on the ability of organisations to recruit enough staff to meet need, both today and in the future.

It is estimated that 80,000 EU nationals are currently involved in the delivery of care and support in England². Whilst this equates to around six per cent of the workforce, the figure disguises significant variation amongst providers.

¹ VODG (2016) *How do disability organisations recruit, retain and develop the right workforce?* Available:

<http://www.vodg.org.uk/uploads/pdfs/2016%20How%20do%20disability%20organisations%20recruit,%20retain%20and%20develop%20the%20right%20workfoce.pdf>

² Skills for Care (2016) *Nationalist of the adult social care workforce 2015*.

Accessed:<https://www.nmdssconline.org.uk/Get.aspx?id=/Research/Adult%20social%20care%20workforce%20reports/Reports/Nationality%20of%20the%20adult%20social%20care%20workforce%202015.pdf>



Some VODG members cite employing up to 25% of their frontline workforce with staff from the EU. Even at the nationally recognised six per cent of the workforce, the future sustainability of social care, through its workforce, is contingent on EU nationals having the legal right to continue working in the UK, and continuing to choose to do.

Even if EU nationals are entitled to remain in the UK, any discrepancies in how EU nationals are treated and what they are entitled to is likely to disempower staff, creating a general feeling of being both unwelcome and under-valued – notably in the light of the low paid nature of the work. This could ultimately fuel dissatisfaction with the UK labour market, encouraging people to leave. Indeed, the debate around the issue of migration alone is likely to inspire high levels of anxiety and could well be deterring current interest (even at this early stage), forming a barrier to EU nationals contributing to the labour market.

Before the referendum result it was established that the social care sector will need to fill around 400,000 jobs by 2035.³ The challenge of filling these vacancies would be exacerbated by a change in the immigration status of EU nationals. This poses high risk for the sector - without an adequate values-driven workforce, organisations will not have the capacity to deliver high quality care, especially in the light of rising demand.

Finally, any wider faltering to the economy that may arise from the process to leave the EU will have a knock on impact on the social care sector. VODG members are dependent on public sector funding; and any further funding cuts could leave a sector in a much deeper state of crisis.

To conclude, the migrant status of current and future EU nationals playing a valuable role in the English social care sector is absolutely critical.

VODG is happy to prepare further briefing, address questions and attend witness sessions.

VODG (Voluntary Organisations Disability Group)
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³ Skills for Care (2016) *National Minimum Data Set for Social Care*. Available: www.nmds-sc-online.org.uk/

Box 1: the context within which voluntary disability organisations work

The adult social care sector is valued at £43billion per year⁴. There are 9.9 million disabled people living in England who represents 19 per cent of the overall population⁵. This includes a significant number of working age adults who require support with their mental health, or who have learning and social or behavioural impairments.

Alongside these working age trends, the number of older people is rising. The latest Census data demonstrate 9.2 million older people aged 65 years and over, with 52 per cent of people living with a long-term health problem or disability. This includes a far greater proportion of the population aged 85 and over.

Within the context of demographic change, funding to support disabled and older people has been significantly reduced since 2010. In the five years to 2015/16 local authority funding of adult social care reduced by £4.6 billion (a 31% reduction in net budgets). For 2016/17 directors of adult social care report that they plan to make further savings of £941m or 7% of the overall budget. They estimate that a quarter of these savings will come from *cutting services* or *reducing personal budgets* for those people who receive care and support⁶.

The adult social care market is fragile with high quality service providers leaving the care market, citing financial pressure for doing so. A stable market requires good management, with the costs of procurement and regulation controlled and a secure workforce supply.

⁴ Skills for Care (2013) *The economic value of adult social care in England*. Available: <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Document-library/NMDS-SC,-workforce-intelligence-and-innovation/Research/SfC-Economic-Impacts-Report-FINAL.pdf>

⁵ Department for Work and Pensions (2015) *Family resources survey*. Accessed: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/437481/family-resources-survey-2013-14.pdf

⁶ Association of Directors of Adult Services (ADASS 2016) *ADASS budget survey 2016*. Accessed: www.adass.org.uk/budget-survey-2016/