



# WE Party Conference

15 – 18 October 2020

**Title:** A new settlement for social care - Addressing the Social Care Emergency in the UK

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**Type of motion:** Emergency policy motion

**Motion Text:**

1 To address the immediate emergency the second wave of Covid 19 presents, WE call  
2 upon all UK governments to immediately:

- 3 • Give people in care homes and those being discharged to care homes access to  
4 Covid-19 tests as a priority, as well as expanding testing for those caring in the  
5 community outside of residential care: both people using care services and staff,  
6 which should also include their families, to improve visiting which is essential to  
7 mental health wellbeing
- 8 • Allow care homes access to suppliers at the same prices available to the NHS

9 To address the systemic issues in social care WE call upon all UK governments to  
10 urgently:

- 11 • Make social care universally free at the point of use, funded through taxation



- Professionalise and regulate the care workforce with training opportunities and pay banding similar to nursing. This should be flexible around the current workforce, rewarding time served and experience and not limiting opportunities based only on academic achievement,
- Make carers' allowance equal to living wage and on an equal basis regardless of local authority
- Make Eligibility for carers allowance be universal and not means tested. It must have no impact on other benefits and must be paid regardless of employment status or age.
- Ensure a "bottom up" approach to social care that centres the voices of people with need for support and family carers and voices of care workers at the frontline.

### **Motion rationale:**

Social Care is now in a state of emergency. The number of Covid 19 cases since the 14th August has risen at an alarming rate<sup>1</sup>, creating an emergency that needs addressing now. The government has confirmed in the last week that it will not be providing reform to social care this year<sup>2</sup>, highlighting the need for this emergency motion.

A lack of testing in care homes was seen as a key failure of the government in the first wave of this pandemic and must be a priority now<sup>3</sup>. In addition, care homes are struggling to purchase the PPE necessary on their limited budgets as they must pay full market price. Giving care homes access to the NHS supply chain would provide them with considerable savings and improved access to necessary PPE.

In 2020, there has been a massive rise in the number of women providing care from 13% of women pre Covid to 51% today. 85% of sandwich carers (caring for elderly and children) are employed, 66% of them are women, 17% reported working fewer hours because of childcare and/or caring during lockdown. Since the pandemic the number of carers reporting poor mental health has risen from 20% to 33%. The biggest impact on mental health has been on women who are caring, up from 23% to 38%<sup>4</sup>.

To create a long-term solution social care in the UK must be made universally free at the point of use. The funding of this through taxation is viable through a small rise in income tax, that will see the highest earners paying the most. The Women's' Budget Group also shows that investment in social care will increase employment and generate tax revenue thereby eventually paying for itself.<sup>5</sup>

Every country in the EU with greater gender equality than the UK expects the state - rather than the family - to provide social care. Half of unpaid carers are struggling to pay basic utility, rent and food bills, and 80% report that their physical health is affected by caring. Relying on unpaid care reduces disabled people's independence and traps families into poverty, placing significant strains on relationships. Taking time out from the labour force to provide care puts women at risk of poverty both whilst providing the care, and in later life when they have not earned enough income to supplement state pensions. Where care is provided by paid carers, these tend to be a) disproportionately jobs done by women b) considered to be relatively low skilled and therefore attract low rates of pay in the market. Current average hourly wages for paid carers are under £6.80, under minimum wage. This undervalues caring and women's work and places women at high risk of poverty<sup>6</sup>. Creating a professionalised and well-paid care force will ensure a reduction in abuse and the highest standards of care provided for all<sup>7</sup>.



## References

<sup>1</sup><https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51768274>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ftadviser.com/pensions/2020/09/18/social-care-reform-not-happening-in-2020/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/may/28/why-did-so-many-people-die-of-covid-19-in-the-uks-care-homes>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/>

<sup>5</sup><https://wbg.org.uk/media/press-releases/investment-in-scandinavian-style-universal-care-would-create-more-than-2-million-jobs/>

<sup>6</sup>[http://www.transforming-care.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/TP2\\_c-Rummery.pdf](http://www.transforming-care.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/TP2_c-Rummery.pdf)

<sup>7</sup><https://www.gmb.org.uk/news/groundbreaking-appg-report-social-care-workforce>