

United Kingdom Homecare Association

The professional association for homecare providers



Mr Eddie Lynch, Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland
Commission for Older People for Northern Ireland
Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP

30 September 2016

Dear Mr Lynch,

Commission draft themes and priority actions

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Commission's draft themes and priority actions, which I have the pleasure to do on behalf of the United Kingdom Homecare Association (UKHCA).

The enclosed paper responds to the issues that the Commission has raised. Please do contact me if you require any additional information.

We look forward to working with the Commission over the coming years and meeting you once again at our Forum on **Thursday, 8 December 2016**.

Yours sincerely,

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Response submitted by UKHCA for the Commission for Older People of Northern Ireland

About UKHCA

- UKHCA is the professional association of home care providers from the independent, voluntary, not-for-profit and statutory sectors. UKHCA helps organisations that provide social care (also known as domiciliary care or homecare), which may include nursing services, to people in their own homes, promoting high standards of care. The Association represents the homecare sector with national and regional policy-makers and regulators, and has over two thousand members across the United Kingdom.
- UKHCA estimates that in 2014/15, the homecare sector in Northern Ireland provided community-based services to more than 41,000 people at any one time and employed around 12,000 people to meet the demand.¹

Executive Summary

- UKHCA welcomes the draft priorities provided by the Commissioner and looks forward to supporting the implementation of these important initiatives over the coming years.
- In the October 2015 Commission report, "Domiciliary Care in Northern Ireland", your predecessor concluded that strong leadership was required in the sector to make sure it did not fail and that the availability of good quality domiciliary care was of paramount importance – a position which we endorsed wholeheartedly. We trust the Commission will continue to regard the serious financial and contracting situation facing the sector and how vital homecare services are in supporting older people to lead dignified and independent lives.
- UKHCA is keen to work with the Commission to achieve the priorities you have set out, to the benefit of people whose care and support needs are delivered at home across Northern Ireland.

Respect

1. *Social inclusion: Ensuring older people remain connected to where they want to be and to their families and friends.*
Many older people in Northern Ireland would prefer to remain at home with appropriate support from family and social care services. It is our role as homecare representatives to support providers to deliver effective services for older people that are of high quality and are financially sustainable to enable people to live at home and in their local community. We therefore support this first priority action.
2. While homecare provides the opportunity for older people to remain at home, we are concerned about the way that very short homecare visits are commissioned by Northern Ireland's Health and Social Care Trusts, and believe that Northern Ireland has a disproportionately high use of 15 minute visits compared to the

¹ Holmes, J., 2016. The State of Homecare in Northern Ireland. UKHCA. URL: <http://www.ukhca.co.uk/downloads.aspx?ID=505>, p.4.

other three UK administrations. Short visits make social inclusion and engagement in activity outside the home difficult to deliver for domiciliary care providers and their careworkers.

3. *Examine the arrangements for older people in nursing care and residential settings.*

We encourage the Commission to examine such arrangements and recognise your predecessor's work in highlighting the problems faced by the domiciliary care sector in the report, "Domiciliary Care in Northern Ireland". We encourage you to continue undertaking improvements in the provision of care for older people in their own homes that reflect the findings of the report.

4. *Press for the introduction of legislation to end age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services.*

UKHCA welcomes this priority action. To be most effective, we would hope that such legislation includes the arrangement of social care services by the State. We consider any form of discrimination based on protected characteristics to be unacceptable.

5. *Monitor and review emerging policy proposals from government to ensure older people receive the health and social care services and support they need.*

Domiciliary care has a leading role to play in the integration of health and social care in Northern Ireland. We support the Commission's approach on this point and recommend that the Commission initiates policy proposals that bring about improvements in Northern Ireland's social care regulations, in a way that improves the quality of care that can be offered by providers.

Value

6. *Encourage employment and entrepreneurship for those over 60.*

UKHCA welcomes and agrees with this priority action, particularly where this policy might relate to supporting older carers in employment; ensuring they are able to remain working while also providing caring responsibilities.

7. *Highlight the benefits of older people getting online and encourage digital inclusion.*

Digital inclusion is important in promoting older people's active participation in society, particularly in a world where communication is increasingly online and friends and relatives live further apart. The opportunities presented by technological developments in health, such as 24-hour monitoring and the ability to contact practitioners remotely, allow older people the freedom and independence in the comfort of their own home, making it a useful tool for greater personalisation of care.

8. *Advocate with government on behalf of older people to be a priority in the Programme for Government.*

UKHCA welcomes this priority action and looks forward to supporting the Commission's implementation of this in the future.

9. *Monitor implementation of actions outlined in the Active Ageing Strategy.*

We welcome this priority, in particular such actions as the importance of community care for older people and ease of access to care when they need it.

10. *Advocate on behalf of, and support those living with age-related health conditions.*

UKHCA welcomes this as a priority action. We reiterate that UKHCA will be willing

to work closely with the Commissioner to raise such important issues to government and other authorities over the coming years.

11. *Help and support older people to make plans and communicate their choices for their end of life.*

It is important that a variety of options are available for older people to ensure their needs and preferences are met. As more older people express the desire to be supported at home at the end of life, it is vital that the option is readily available for them.

Protect

12. *Look at the strategic approach to the provision of services and support for dementia in Northern Ireland.*

UKHCA has published a report on dementia services and support for those living in their own homes, and so understand the need to ensure correct provision. We would be willing to offer support in realising this priority. Further information can be found in our document, "Dementia and Homecare: Driving Quality and Innovation", which I attached to the email with this response.

13. *Examine the role of the health and social care regulator and make recommendations to improve its effectiveness.*

We welcome this priority, particularly in terms of ensuring the robustness of inspection reports and how the regulator can further improve the domiciliary care sector in Northern Ireland (as we stated in paragraph 5), its public perception and ultimately, the service it provides to older people. UKHCA considers that regulation and inspection of homecare services must include the commissioners of care to create an equitable system of care provision.

14. *Identify the scale of financial abuse against older people, raise awareness of the issue and challenge relevant organisations to make required changes.*

UKHCA considers that the commissioning of safe homecare services must include a robust risk assessment that includes all forms of exploitation and abuse. UKHCA supports the development of tools which support awareness and reporting of untoward activity involving vulnerable people and are keen to work in partnership with the Commission and regulators to devise protocols for the elimination of abusive conduct.

15. *Work with criminal justice agencies to better support older people who are victims of crime.*

UKHCA welcomes this priority action.

16. *Press government for the introduction of an Adult Safeguarding Bill for Northern Ireland.*

We agree and look forward to seeing the Commission's implementation of this over the coming years.

Recommendations

We ask the Commission to continue include the role of the domiciliary care sector in the lives of many older people in Northern Ireland in its future work. We make the following recommendations for consideration:

- The successful implementation of this scheme will benefit from engagement with homecare providers to develop the tools, contractual arrangements and protocols

that will underpin the Commission's approach to older people's wellbeing in Northern Ireland.

- That the Commission identifies expertise, resources and financial assets to underwrite the development and implementation of the Commission's approach to developing the care of older people in Northern Ireland including educational and development programmes for key staff in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors.
- That the Commission identifies a scheme of continuous monitoring of the effectiveness of the Commission's approach to developing the care of older people in Northern Ireland that are fully resourced ensuring that costs are recognised.
- That the Commission identifies a range of measures for which enable sharing of information concerning the abuse and exploitation of older people so that staff in all agencies have clarity concerning effective reporting and alert raising methods.
- That the Commission considers home-based support is the automatic and default position for all agencies involved in the general health and wellbeing for older people.

Enclosures and on-line links

- UKHCA (2015) Dementia and Homecare: Driving Quality and Innovation. URL: <http://www.ukhca.co.uk/downloads.aspx?ID=488>
- UKHCA (2016) The State of Homecare in Northern Ireland. URL: <http://www.ukhca.co.uk/downloads.aspx?ID=505>