

Reconfiguration Criteria Consultation  
Department of Health  
Room C3.6  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast  
BT4 3SQ

24 January 2017

Dear Sirs,

**Department of Health Consultation on Criteria for Reconfiguring Health and Social Care Services**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation on criteria for reconfiguring health and social care services in Northern Ireland, which I have the pleasure to do on behalf of the United Kingdom Homecare Association (UKHCA).

We have provided a comment on the criteria proposed by the Department as part of the consultation process and have the pleasure of sharing our response within the enclosed paper. Please do contact me if you require any additional information.

Yours faithfully,



James Whynacht

Policy Officer, UKHCA  
Tel: 0208 661 8163  
E-mail: james.whynacht@ukhca.co.uk

## **About UKHCA**

United Kingdom Homecare Association (UKHCA) is the professional association of homecare providers from the independent, voluntary, not-for-profit and statutory sectors. UKHCA helps organisations that provide homecare services (also known as domiciliary care), which may include nursing services, promoting high standards of care. The Association represents the homecare sector with national and regional policy-makers, regulators and the public. UKHCA has over two thousand homecare providers across the United Kingdom, including 30 in Northern Ireland.

## **Response to the Department of Health Consultation on Criteria for Reconfiguring Health and Social Care Services**

We as an organisation broadly agree with the criteria set out in the consultation document for assessing the sustainability of health and social care services. We would like to comment on Criteria 4 and 6 which discuss the health and social care workforce, and effective out-of-hospital care models and shared care delivery models. These are the criteria which are most specific to our area of expertise.

While there are benefits to moving care out of hospitals and caring for people within their own homes, we are concerned about the effect that this may have on the homecare workforce without adequate planning and preparation.

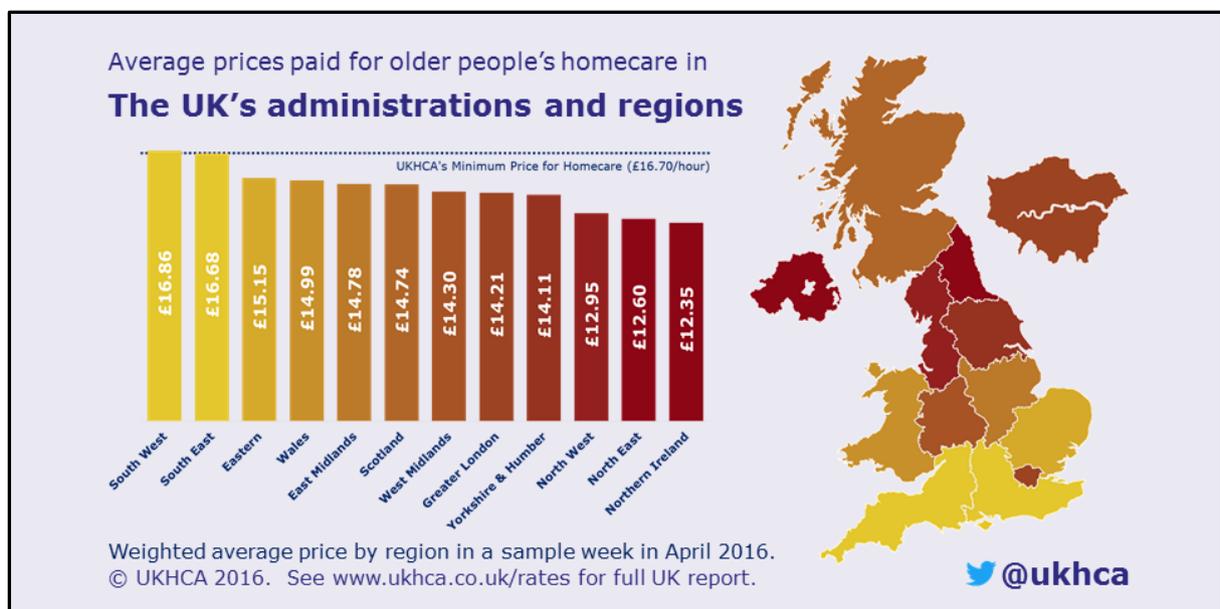
Taking on additional health-based responsibilities would be a significant change in duties for providers of homecare.

There would undoubtedly be an opportunity to develop the social care workforce in the North; however, this would not happen effectively without further investment and training.

The levels of additional training required by front line care staff to take on further health and care responsibilities will not be possible on the current level of funding received by homecare services from Northern Ireland's health and social care trusts, which we believe has a significant impact on providers' ability to up-skill the homecare workforce.

The financial context within which domiciliary care services are operating in is extremely challenging, with very low prices being offered to the independent sector by health and social care trusts.

UKHCA published figures in 2016<sup>1</sup> which showed the average weighted price paid for an hour of homecare in each UK administration. The average weighted price in Northern Ireland was £12.35 per hour, compared to the UK average of £14.58. The national picture of prices paid across the UK's regions is shown in the following graph.



The average weighted price in Northern Ireland is £2.33 (16%) lower than the UK average.

UKHCA also published figures on the average price paid by 4 out of the 5 health and social care trusts who provided data in response to a Freedom of Information request. These figures showed that the average price dropped as low as £11.42 per hour for the Western Health and Social Care Trust.

<sup>1</sup> Angel, C. (2016), The Homecare Deficit 2016, <https://www.ukhca.co.uk/downloads.aspx?ID=525>



In "A Minimum Price for Homecare"<sup>2</sup> UKHCA have calculated a minimum price for an hour of homecare that should be paid to providers of £16.70 (as of April 2016.)

This minimum price is designed to cover an hour of homecare commissioned by local authorities, while enabling providers to meet their legal wage obligations and the ability to run a sustainable business.

UKHCA's minimum price of £16.70 per hour does not take account for the demanding tasks required of homecare workers or the employers' ability to be competitive within their local market.

The average weighted price paid by health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland of £12.35 is below our minimum price by £4.35.

It is therefore difficult to see how major services can be provided to patients in their own homes without a significant change in the level of funding received by providers. We would also be concerned to see a situation where providers are

<sup>2</sup> Angel, C. (2015), *A Minimum Price for Homecare*, Version 3.1: <https://www.ukhca.co.uk/downloads.aspx?ID=434>

increasingly required to step-in and fill shortfalls of care which could be provided by other health and social care services. In the current climate, many providers are struggling to recruit and retain workers on the fee levels that health and social care trusts are willing to pay.

While we support the proposed criteria, but urge the Department to consider the possible unintended consequences on domiciliary care provision, a service which is already under considerable strain, when moving care out of hospitals and into the community.