



National Provider Issues Group

Update

September and October 2022

Introduction

The National Provider Issues Group is co-chaired by the [Care Provider Alliance](#) and the Care and Health Improvement Programme (CHIP). CHIP is jointly-led and delivered by the [Local Government Association](#) and the [Association of Directors of Adult Social Services](#) (ADASS). The group meets fortnightly to consider issues of concern for the sector, to receive updates on these matters from relevant contributors, and to ensure the experience and views of the sector are fed into decision-making on these matters.

In September and October 2022, the following matters were the focus of their meetings.

Cyber Security

Highlighted the risk to social care providers of cyber attacks, and information available to support providers. (See [Digital Social Care website](#).)

Cost of Living Crisis and Energy Costs

Provider representatives discussed the impact on the sector of both the cost-of-living issues and the energy crisis. Emphasised that this is on top of the staffing issues that the sector faces. Fuel costs are a particular issue for home care staff who have to travel to do their work. Noted that both BEIS and DHSC need to be involved in any national solutions to help the sector. Also noted delays in Government action due to the recent changes in ministers. Market sustainability is a major issue, recognised by local government and health, as well as central government. DHSC attended to discuss and want to work with the group to identify workable responses. Hard evidence from the sector is useful to inform government solutions, also perspectives from not-for profits, small and medium enterprises and non-registered care services. This is to be a regular item for this group throughout the winter.

[See CPA briefing: Energy costs and social care](#)

Winter Pressures: Vaccinations and Testing

Following the “step-down” of asymptomatic testing, DHSC have attended the group to discuss continued requirements in this area, and will continue to do so through the winter. The group are aware that the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) hold responsibility for any decisions to step up any requirements, such as asymptomatic testing, mask requirements and outbreak management, but felt it is important to take action in good time and to ensure clarity to the sector on the support available. Also important to continue encouraging the take-up of vaccination - both flu and the Autumn COVID boosters.

See [Winter vaccinations programme for health and social care workers \(Public Health England\)](#).

See [NHS UK information on flu and covid vaccines for the public](#)

Workforce Pressures and International Recruitment

DHSC reps attended to provide updates about responses to workforce pressures and international recruitment in particular. Key announcement of £500m fund for discharge and workforce as part of [Our Plan for Patients](#), and £15m fund to enable local areas to break down barriers around international recruitment, as well as commitment of £10m to speed up the digitalising of social care records. Confirmed that the newly announced funds are separate and new money from Department underspend. The group emphasised the risks with linking it all to hospital discharge, when the need is wider than this. More detail sought on how this will be operationalised. This is to be a regular item for the group.

Providers and ICS Partnerships

NHS E attended to update the group on integrated care boards and relationships with providers. They were keen to learn from the group how to improve engagement with providers. They highlighted work done with the [Kings Fund](#) on this topic and sought views from the group. They recognised earlier feedback about the risk of NHS seeing engagement through their own lens around flow and hospital discharge, and the need for to be wider than this. NHSE intends to work with a “learning partner” to test models of engagement with the sector. The group was clear that any learning partner must have a good understanding, and holistic view, of the adult social care sector and to welcome social care as a key partner. An invitation was extended for NHS E to return to discuss this work in the future.

See [CPA briefing on ICS partnership opportunities](#).

Fair Cost of Care Update

Following the deadline for responses from councils (14th October 2022), DHSC attended the group to provide an update. All councils had responded on time. All of the returns are to be analysed. The provisional plans for next steps, including any communications to the sector, will need to be agreed by the new minister. Provider representatives were keen to be involved in the joint work going forward and to know when they will be able to access any of this information. Data and provisional Market Sustainability Plans (MSPs) should be available before February 2023. It was noted that the final MSPs must be submitted in February 2023.

[See Fair Cost of Care and Market Sustainability Plans on Gov.UK.](#)

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