

# Health and wellbeing of care workers must have a place in UK social care reform

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The health and wellbeing needs of the social care workforce must be brought in line with the standards set for NHS workers as part of the reform of UK social care, according to public and occupational health

experts at Imperial College London. Writing in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, they say it is impossible to understand what is happening across the fragmented care sector with respect to workforce health and wellbeing.

There are an estimated 17,700 different organizations providing care in the sector. Just like [healthcare workers](#), social care workers come into close contact with patients at their most vulnerable. Yet, unlike healthcare workers there is no national guidance around worker health.

The government has pledged to use the new Health and Social Care Levy to improve training and support in the care sector, as well as bring an end to the high costs of care faced by those who need it.

Lead author Dr. Lara Shemtob, Honorary Clinical Research Fellow at the School of Public Health, Imperial College London, said: "Carers delivering care at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy are least protected. With no carer unions or professional bodies and workforce health and wellbeing falling outside of the CQC's remit, a national approach to standards and audit is necessary to protect carers and those they care for."

In a recent survey over 70% of care providers reported increasing challenges in recruiting and retaining staff and maintaining staff morale.

"The importance of baking [occupational health](#) into social care reform is twofold", said Dr. Shemtob. "Firstly, the fragmented sector needs cohesive guidance around workforce [health](#) to protect staff and patients. Secondly, improving workforce wellbeing and strengthening the appeal of [social care](#) work will go some way to tackling the recruitment crisis."

The authors say there is a need to improve the infrastructure around workforce health in care, from an immunization program to protect both

carers and patients, to support with the emotional burden of dealing with mentally unwell or distressed patients and the physical demands of personal care.

"Carers need avenues for support, [standards](#) for dealing with periods of [workforce](#) illness and policies tackling absenteeism and presenteeism", added Dr. Shemtob.

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