

Social care ‘near collapse’ as 1m denied vital help

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Senior health figures say the state of social care services has become ‘a national disgrace’ ALAMY

Theresa May has been warned that social care is “on the brink of collapse” with more than 1m older people denied help with basic tasks.

Soaring numbers are being left without support to get out of bed, dress, wash or go to the lavatory, according to an unprecedented alert to the prime minister by health leaders. Millions more rely on unpaid care from relatives and friends.

Senior health figures last night said the “perilous state of social care services” had become “a national disgrace”. They urged May to act two years after her government promised a solution to the crisis.

The warning is from a new coalition of organisations in a four-page letter seen by The Sunday Times. It is the first time leading NHS and health groups have united to raise concerns over social care.

Professor Andrew Goddard, president of the Royal College of Physicians, Professor Carrie MacEwen, chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, and Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard, chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners, are among the signatories.

The letter says: “Social care is on the brink of collapse and the sector has been waiting two years for the government to bring forward proposals.”

In 2017 ministers promised a green paper setting out how to fund social care, but it has been delayed several times. Since then, 626,701 elderly people have been refused care by their council and 7,240 have lost their homes and any savings to pay for it, according to Age UK.

The letter says a failure to fund basic social care creates the risk that May’s extra £20bn for the NHS will be wasted, and suggests greater integration between social care services and the NHS.

Delayed discharges from hospital due to a lack of social care cost the NHS more than £500 a minute, or over £289m a year. “We cannot go on like this,” the letter says.

Niall Dickson, chief executive of the NHS Confederation, which is leading the new Health for Care coalition, said: “Everyone’s mind is elsewhere just now, but this is a national scandal and a national disgrace.

“Record numbers of older people are being left to struggle without the care and support they need. It leads to a grossly inefficient system. The cost of doing nothing is great and the personal impact on individuals and their families can be devastating.”

The new coalition will be launched tomorrow. It follows last week’s creation of a cross-party group of MPs to tackle the social care crisis.

Tim Roache, general secretary of the GMB union, which sponsors the new parliamentary group, said the care system “is crumbling beneath us”.

Last night the Department of Health and Social Care was unable to give a publication date for the green paper.

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