

Struggling social care ‘will need billions to keep going’ after migration points system

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Thursday February 20 2020, 12.01am, The Times



The frail and elderly will be among those suffering the most from the effects of the new rules

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Billions of pounds will be needed from taxpayers to help the social care sector cope with the [end of low-skilled migration](#), experts have predicted.

Analysts said that paying more to compensate for the loss of EU staff would push a struggling system “over the edge”, with the frail, elderly, cancer patients and NHS suffering the most.

Ministers have told bosses that they will have to pay their staff better. However, companies say they cannot afford it while councils pay so little for care, intensifying pressure on Boris Johnson to make good on his pledge to fix the elderly care system “once and for all”.

One in 14 jobs in the social care system is unfilled, with 122,000 vacancies in a sector where one in 11 workers is from the EU.

Pay in care homes and home care services lags behind supermarkets as well as the NHS, and The Health Foundation think tank has estimated that catching up with health service pay rates would cost £1.7 billion by 2024. This is on top of more than £10 billion needed annually to stabilise the system and keep up with demand.

Ben Gershlick, senior economist at the think tank, said while it was not clear exactly how much pay would need to rise to compensate for the loss of EU workers it could well run into the billions. “The view is that the private sector should just pay more but it’s really hard to do when the system is chronically underfunded. It’s incumbent on government to fund the system properly,” he said.

Care England, an industry group, said that bringing care workers’ average salary of £16,200 up to the £25,600 threshold to qualify to immigrate to Britain would cost £7.9 billion.

John Appleby, chief economist at The Nuffield Trust, said: “Stopping migration for social care risks pushing a sector on which many vulnerable people depend over the edge.”