



**Craig Whittaker MP**

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### **Availability of Hospital Beds and Social Care**

Thank you for contacting me about the availability of hospital beds. As you will appreciate, it cannot be separated from the issue of adult social care. Ensuring that hospital beds are available in sufficient numbers when needed is, in large part, dependent on the provision of effective social care.

Providing social care to all those who need it is one of the biggest challenges our country faces, especially because of our ageing population. This is a vital aspect of the Government's commitment to making sure this country works for everyone and that the most vulnerable in society gain the support they need.

Money alone will not fix the problem and reform is needed to encourage high standards across the whole country. Some councils already provide high quality social care within their existing budgets, showing that reform can be achieved; half of all delayed discharges from hospital to home arise in just 24 local authorities.

I know that the Government recognises the current pressures facing local communities. Since 2015 local authorities have had greater flexibility over the use of the council tax social care precept, so they can choose to raise extra money for adult social care. Local authorities have greater flexibility over the use of the council tax social care precept, so they can choose to raise extra money as well as retaining savings from the New Homes Bonus, totalling £240 million.

There will be further support. In March 2017, the Chancellor committed an additional £2 billion for councils in England over the next three years to spend on adult social care services. £1 billion will be provided in 2017-18, to enable immediate action. Since 2015, councils will have access in total to £9.25 billion more dedicated funding for social care over the next three years. I am also happy to note that the Autumn Budget provides £42 million additional funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant in 2017-18, which will support people with disabilities stay in their own homes throughout their care for as long as possible. This investment is central to the Government's efforts to reduce delayed transfers of care from the NHS to social care, and free up between two and three thousand hospital beds this winter.

The Government will consult on all aspects of social care, from the cost of care to possible caps on fees, and how to guarantee its financial stability in the long run. I acknowledge that there have been many consultations on care policy, however, the Government intends that the upcoming consultation will usher in a real cultural change in how we tackle the issues of an aging population as a society.

Thank you again for contacting me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP