



Local Government Association

LGA response to the European Commission green paper on the EU health workforce

The Local Government Association

The Local Government Association of England and Wales (LGA) represents 466 local authorities which cover every part of England and Wales. Together they represent over 50 million people and spend around £113 billion a year on local services. They include county councils, metropolitan district councils, English unitary authorities, London boroughs, shire district councils and Welsh unitary authorities, along with fire authorities, police authorities, national park authorities and passenger transport authorities.

The health and well-being of their residents is an important issue for all councils as community leaders. In England, this is delivered through the provision of social care services and also through partnership with local National Health Service bodies.

The LGA welcomes the fact that the green paper recognises the wide scope of the health workforce and that this includes the social care workforce. We would ask that any future papers refer to social care workers as well as healthcare workers, in order to clarify and confirm that the issues facing the health workforce are also affecting the social care workforce. Local authorities in England and Wales are already experiencing a shortage of social care workers and are recruiting overseas workers to solve this problem.

The LGA welcomes the European Commission's green paper on the EU health workforce and believes that the Commission can help to stimulate an important debate about the need to think beyond dealing with these issues by focussing on workforce issues.

All the suggestions made in the green paper are good ones but the LGA believes that they are not going to be enough to cope with the enormity of this problem in the longer term.

Demands on social care and its workforce

The demand for health and social care support is increasing and the current models for service provision are not sustainable either in terms of costs or in terms of finding enough workers to employ. With an ageing population, the traditional informal caring group (e.g. who looked after their own parents etc) will now become those in need of care and support and their children are a much smaller proportionate group of the population. It has been estimated that by 2020 we will need a 25 per cent increase in the number of people working with older people in social care in England.

Workforce recruitment and retention

Councils are working hard to find ways to address the challenges of recruiting and retaining staff for social work and social care. The LGA's sister organisation, the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), has collated a number of case studies. For example:

- Leicester City Council's domiciliary home care service suffered from low recruitment and retention rates in the care sector. It used several radical new approaches¹ to address this. These included identifying new ways of advertising and disseminating information about social care job opportunities; 're-branding' and professionalising social care work by changing job titles and job descriptions, introducing new uniforms and enhancing training opportunities.
- The IDeA has also created a series of checklists² from actions taken by local authorities to tackle recruitment and retention issues.
- Migrant workers are recognised and significant source of skilled labour for the care sector. Skills for Care South West have commissioned the development of a pioneering induction pack³ specifically for overseas migrant workers. The project team is seeking employers and overseas employees in the South West to contribute to this development to find out what is currently happening with inductions, what is missing and what could be improved.

Additionally, a workshop on "Care and support workers for health and social care in 2020: Sustaining and developing the workforce and wider implications"⁴ was held in November 2008 by the IDeA and the National Health Service Workforce Review Team to look at a number of issues affecting the social care workforce.

¹ <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=6588963>

² <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=6589491>

³ <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=7012126>

⁴ <http://www.wrt.nhs.uk/index.php/projects/37-projects/110-joint-wrt-idea-social-care-workshop>

This included reflecting on the options available for supporting people with social care needs, given the ever increasing demands for these services and the potential lack of sufficient staff and funding to fulfill this and identifying what additional information gathering and research is required to better understand the issues and the options.

Role of the EU

The EU could help to raise social care workforce matters as an important issue with community leaders and planners. The European Commission could help to start a debate in which countries, national and local governments become aware of the need, not only to directly develop innovative workforce initiatives, but crucially also to plan and design our future ways of living so that many more people can live independently without the need for the intensive social care support we have now. This issue should influence decisions including:

- housing provision,
- where shops are located, and
- transport provision, and other ways of designing more 'frail elderly friendly and supportive' communities.

As planners work on a 20 year time frame this work needs to start now.

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