

The Queen's Speech 2021 - Still No Word on Care.

Speaking in response to the Queen's Speech, Women's Budget Group Director Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson said today:

After the failure of successive governments to address the crisis in social care, it was disappointing that the Queen's Speech only contained a vague commitment that 'proposals for social care reform would be brought forward'.

The statement was not followed by any details on the timetable for when these proposals will be brought forward. This omission marks two years of silence on tackling the crisis in social care, despite Boris Johnson's announcement to the nation in 2019 that he would 'fix' the sector with 'a clear plan we have prepared' and the Conservative Party's manifesto commitment, in the same year, to deliver action on social care.

Nor was there any clear commitment to address the growing crisis in childcare, other than a statement that, 'measures will be brought forward to ensure that children have the best start to life, with no further details. The absence of an announcement on the childcare sector comes in the same week that the Department of Education published [data](#) showing a loss of over 2000 childcare providers this year so far.

It is also disappointing that no reference was made to the Employment Bill which could have included long awaited and crucial measures on parental leave and flexible working. This is a missed opportunity to strengthen redundancy protection of pregnant women and new mothers, who we know are most likely to experience unfair redundancy this year as the furlough scheme comes to an end. We add our voices to the call, made by organisations such as Maternity Action, that Maria Miller's Pregnancy & Maternity (Redundancy Protection) Bill be approved as soon as possible.

What Is Needed?

Social Care

The Covid pandemic has exposed that care is the backbone of our society. **Our social care system must be one that ensures high quality care to everyone, based on their needs not on their ability to pay. The crisis in care is a gendered issue** - women are more likely than men to work in care, be in receipt of care in old age and to take on responsibility for unpaid care for elderly, disabled and/or vulnerable adults of working age.

WBG calls for a new settlement for social care that provides a stable, sustainable funding base to ensure that rising care needs are met now and into the future. This should take the form of a **Universal Care Service** that provides locally based residential, domiciliary, and other forms of care, free at the point of delivery and on an equal footing with the NHS.

For more information about the crisis in care and our recommendations for it please see our [Spring Budget 2021: Social care, gender and Covid-19](#).

Childcare

The Covid pandemic, and the government's response to it, has exacerbated the crisis in early childcare with implications for children, parents, providers, and wider society. **Every child in the country needs**

to have their access to high quality and affordable early childhood education, and care guaranteed. Investment in childcare will be critical to undo the damage that has been done to all the children and families who have been locked out of childcare due to the pandemic. We already know that between **April 2020 and March 2021, the number of childcare providers fell by 2,940.** The Government must also recognise that an investment in childcare is an investment in essential social infrastructure, with the potential to deliver significant long-term benefits for the economy and society.

For more information on the crisis in the childcare sector and our recommendations for it please see our [Spring Budget 2021: Childcare, gender and Covid-19.](#)

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