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Social care

A properly funded social care system should be the backbone of a thriving economy



Government must invest in social care to drive the economy

A properly funded social care system would power growth, unlock jobs, boost business and save the NHS money, says a Future Social Care Coalition (FSCC) report published this week.

The report, entitled Carenomics, lays bare how the fragmented and underfunded care sector, which currently has 152,000 job vacancies is 'stifling' the economy and having a negative effect on the labour market.

The analysis warns that the government's levelling up agenda and other measures to transform the UK cannot be achieved without substantial new investment in social care.

Carenomics uses extensive evidence to outline the economic case for putting more money into the care sector, which generated £51.5bn for the economy in England in 2021-22*.

The report says care staff are crucial to the UK labour force and economy. It calls for urgent intervention from ministers to attract and retain workers to an 'overlooked' sector that is bigger than electricity, water, and waste

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management.

At least four in five UK jobs pay more than those in social care. Official figures show that care staff with more than five years' experience earn just 7p per hour more than colleagues who've been in the job for less than a year.

If investment in social care were boosted and more care workers recruited on better wages, it's likely more people aged 50-64, currently unable to work because of caring responsibilities, could return to the labour market, says the report.

An increase of just 1% in the 50 to 64 age bracket in work could boost GDP by around £5.7bn per year, according to data in the Carenomics report.

Employment chances for disabled people would also improve if they had sufficient care support, says the report. Other benefits of investment in the care sector include a reduction in the carer's allowance bill**.

Care worker Sam Thornton, who has been supporting people with learning disabilities for more than 30 years, said: "The job I do is as skilled as a nurse in a hospital but we're not valued. The responsibilities we have are mind-blowing at times, people's lives are in our hands.

"Social care has been in crisis for years. More investment is desperately needed to make the work more attractive to new staff."

UNISON general secretary and joint FSCC chair Christina McAnea said: "A properly funded social care system should be the backbone of a thriving economy.

"But the government has allowed the sector to become underfunded and fragmented. It's no wonder care staff are leaving for jobs where the pay and conditions are much better.

"More money for social care must be an urgent priority for the next government. This would take the pressure off an overstretched NHS, allow people caring for relatives to find jobs, help reduce social inequality and increase tax revenue for the exchequer."

*Economic research from Skills for Care calculated the sector contributed £51.5bn of economic activity in England in 2021/22.

**The bill for carer's allowance was £3.39bn in 2022/23, of which £3.36bn went to working age people (Source: Department for Work and Pensions)

Read or download Carenomics [here](#)

The [Future Social Care Coalition](#) is an alliance of more than 80 organisations and individuals including private and other social care providers, charities and trade bodies, those who use social care, and unions.