

Budget in Brief – Social care headlines



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As I sit in a misty car park in Brighton – waiting to deliver a presentation to social care colleagues entitled ‘Reasons to be cheerful?!’ – I am listening to Philip Hammond outline the first full budget post Brexit. What will it mean for social care?

Of course – the devil is always in the detail – and what I will lay out now will only give you a flavour of the what – without the necessary detail of the how and when. More on that to follow...

Here goes with some of my observations...

Funding

The Chancellor announced an additional £1bn for Adult Social Care – which he wrapped up in a statement suggesting there would be an additional £2bn for the sector over the next three years. This £1bn in 2017 was described as a bridge to the Better Care Fund additional money back loaded towards the end of the parliament.

Of course, this funding comes on the back of the changes announced in the local government settlement in December, which included giving Local Authorities permission to increase their council tax to up to 5%; 3% of that protected for social care funding. It also included the announcement of funding to be derived from reallocation of the new homes bonus to local authorities to balance out the geographic impact of the council tax levy.

He also referred to the need to address the long term funding of social care (no groans please!) suggesting that there would be a green paper on this issue forthcoming – although promising not to exhume the notion of a ‘death tax’. Once again there was a focus on performance as well as funding – with additional ‘support’ being offered to authorities battling with the highest levels of delayed discharge.

The very strong link in the budget to increased funding to reduce delayed discharge of older people will be of great concern, with the budget statement appearing not to recognise the much broader social care responsibilities of authorities towards people with learning disabilities, and indeed to prevention.

Workforce

This had a number of areas of interest for social care. Once again a reiteration of the increase to the national living wage. Alongside this, potentially some areas where there will be greater incentives for people to consider entering employment including:

- Extension of free child care for 3 to 4 year olds to 30 hours per week
- New funding for ‘return ship’ schemes to bring people back into public and private sector after a career break
- Apprenticeships – including increased emphasis on parity of esteem for vocation to academic routes – potentially bringing new grants and funding available for people entering into vocational routes – which provides potential for social care

Employment Status

There was some interesting focus on developing parity between those who work who are employed and those who are self-employed. The budget was seeking to recognise the growing parity between rights for individuals who are employed and those who are self-employed and some suggested changes to the taxation system which would recognise this. This may serve to reduce the appeal of self-employed status, which may have implications for some models of work within the sector. I will return to this area when I have more detail.

Now – I have to go and give my presentation – but hope that this brief update on some of the key issues is helpful! Over and out...

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