

Spring Statement – Social Care Implications



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Whilst Philip Hammond may have deemed himself at his most *Tigger* Like – there was little to jump about for social care in the [Spring Statement](#). Although no one was expecting any significant announcements, the ongoing reassertion of the increased funding that has gone into health and social care is at best predictable, and at worst an indication of a feeling of ‘job done’ with no recognition of the experience on the ground. Those who share the bounce and stripes of the chancellor might take some comfort from his dangling carrot of the potential for more funding for social care – public finances allowing. However, the more substantive opportunity for influence and change will, I suspect, coincide with the Spending Review of 2019 – which timescales allowing – ought to be heavily influenced by the outcome of the Green paper and subsequent consultation.

However, what was in the statement that might have ramifications for the sector – here is a quick guide – and some things to watch out for.

Workforce

The increase in the National Living Wage to £7.83 in April was confirmed. The Chancellor equated this to a £2K increase for those on minimum wage since 2016. Whilst this will be a cumulative figure, and probably includes this coming financial year – it does put into perspective the paucity of the £9bn additional funding across health and social care – when potentially up to nearly £3bn of that could have been spent over the same period on the changing salaries of the 1.4 million social care staff, once you build in minimum wage and differential uplifts. It will be interesting to see how the Autumn budget reflects on the outcome of the ongoing negotiations happening between the management and unions in respect to Nurses and Agenda for Change staff. If this pay award is successful, we may well see an explicit acknowledgement of meeting the costs of that within the budgetary announcements later in the year.

There is more money for apprenticeships, acknowledging in part, the challenges for small organisations to support apprentices. The detail of how the additional £80m is to be spent will be valuable, and particularly whether it picks up on any of the particular social care concerns around 20% off the job training requirements.

Technology & Industrial Strategy

There was lots of talk in the statement about keeping the UK at the ‘forefront of technologies’. I am not sure social care was front of his mind when he made that statement, but I think that there are real opportunities for the sector in getting the focus of new technologies into care through the [Modern Industrial Strategy](#) and the [Grand Challenge around ageing](#). The recognition of Ageing as a key component of future global economic strategy is positive, and we must ensure that the opportunity that this presents to look at issues around enhanced service models and delivery, productivity, innovation, digital maturity and more are recognised through this narrative.

In addition, access to fast broadband is on the agenda, and one to look out for is the £190 million announced for the local full fibre challenge fund – alongside £25 million for the development of the first 5G test beds.

So – in short– whilst Spring has officially sprung – the predictions of snow for this coming weekend won’t surprise many in social care who most definitely don’t feel the long hard winter is over yet.

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