

# Health and Social Care Secretary NCASC Conference speech

Good afternoon – I'm grateful to the LGA, ADASS and the ADCS for bringing us all together for this timely conversation.

For me, one of the most poignant early moments in this role was hearing about Chris Dando and his team at Court House Retirement Home in Cheddar. Chris and his team of 12 moved into the home for three months throughout the first lockdown – protecting residents from the dangers of Covid-19.

It's the kind of sacrifice I know thousands of colleagues across social care have made through the pandemic – putting the safety of the people they care for over and above seeing their families, their friends, and even their own children. I can tell you, as a husband, a father and a son, I can only imagine what that feels like.

It's hard to find the right words to express the full extent of my appreciation and admiration for what everyone working in social care, and what they have achieved. I know there are tens of thousands of families around the country that feel the same way as I do.

We've seen social care colleagues take on some really heavy burdens. They've comforted people through terrifying times, sometimes taking the place of loving families at the bedsides of people as they sadly breath their last.

Equally, we've seen the continued heroism of our unpaid carers. The man shielding with his disabled daughter. The woman caring for her elderly father. They've confronted a time of unimaginable uncertainty with incredible compassion and grace.

And we've seen people in local government – people like you – pull out all the stops to just make it work. Just make the system work.

Together, you have been the very best of us. You make me and you make your country proud.

I've always believed that how we treat people who need care really reflects on our society.

In my University days – when as a volunteer for a charity at my University that was called 'Community Action' – I volunteer to visit a lady called Margaret in a local care home in Exeter. Perhaps it wasn't the wildest way to spend my youth, but it felt important. Important for her, because it helped her feel less lonely and isolated. But it was important for me – even at that age – because I learned so much more about the society that we're all a part of.

So it's humbling that it's now my job to work with you all, to tackle the challenges we face in social care. Challenges that are old and new: like how

do we pay for it? How do we staff it? How do we support an ageing population? And much else.

I'm sure of one thing: that we've never been held back by our lack of love or compassion. But it's no secret to say the system doesn't always work for everyone in it.

So the question for people like me – and people like you – is this: how do we improve the system so it matches the care and dedication of our workforce?

It's no exaggeration to say it's one of the most challenging questions of our time. So challenging, of course, that successive governments have ducked it.

But this government is determined to rise to it, even if that means making difficult decisions and delivering some difficult messages. That's just what a responsible government should do.

Because being serious about levelling up means being serious about social care.

There's no doubt, of course, it's complex. Anyone who says it's simple is kidding themselves. But today I thought I would reflect on three areas where I think we can really make the difference: in Funding, Integration and Workforce.

So, let's start with the money. Because we know we need big changes in this area.

Back when I was Communities Secretary – working with many of you, and it's good to be working together again – I pushed for the Social Care Precept and put money-raising powers in the hands of local leaders. And now, back in government, I've worked with No. 10 and the Treasury to take social care funding to the next level.

In September, we announced the Health and Social Care Levy, which will help put social care onto a more sustainable financial footing for the future.

We're putting £5.4 billion into the sector over the next three years.

And we're also giving councils around £1.6 billion of additional grant funding in each of the next three years.

More than that, many families across this country will have greater peace of mind knowing that we're capping lifetime personal care costs – bringing to an end the cruel lottery that so many families have faced.

But all of us know it's not just the money that needs to change, it's the way that we work too.

So the second area I want to reflect on this afternoon is Integration, and the changes we need to achieve more of that.

Now, sometimes conversations about integration can feel very abstract. There

are terms like “system working”, “seamless care”, and “person-centred health”. All of them hint – in some way – at where we’re trying to get to.

But if I had to put it in a more straightforward way, what I would say is this: I want to stop people from bouncing around the system. The integration between health and care is the only way I think we can achieve that goal.

So the reshaping of our health and care landscape – which is taking shape around us as we speak – has integration at its heart.

A couple of days ago, I did the Third Reading of our Health and Care Bill before parliament. It’s a uniquely important piece of legislation. It will mean integration by default; it will remove the rules and regulations that make sensible decision making harder; and it will boost accountability to the people who use health and care.

Supplementing the Health and Care Bill will be two White Papers. One on Adult Social Care and a second on Integration.

We’ll be bringing forward the White Paper on Adult Social Care very shortly. And today, I want to share some of the principles that will underpin it that particular White Paper.

First: That everyone has choice, control and support to live independent lives. Second: that everyone can access outstanding personalised care and support. And third: that Adult Social Care is fair and accessible for everyone who needs it.

Now of course, we’re not starting from scratch – we’re building on the best of the 2014 Care Act, but being unsentimental in leaving behind what hasn’t worked well from that Act.

And although today isn’t the occasion to set out the White Paper in detail, it is a good moment to pay thanks to everyone who’s played their part in shaping it, not least the LGA, ADASS and ADCS, alongside many hundreds of other organisations. The White Paper will be better for all your contributions – and Adult Social Care will be better for them too.

The second White Paper is on Integration.

Through the pandemic, so many places have shown what’s possible when people work together. We’ve joined-up on jobs. We’ve been smarter about discharge. And we’ve got data flowing where it needs to go.

So our Integration White Paper will build on all of that, setting out our ambitions on shared electronic health and care records and delivering digital services together.

It will also set out a more joined-up approach to the workforce. Not only do we want to make it easier for staff to move between health and care, but we want more joint roles across health and social care too.

And this spirit of integration runs through so many of our other pieces of

work. Like our Disability Strategy, and our Autism Strategy, for example. For too long, disabled and autistic people have found that public services often don't meet their needs. I want those days to be numbered.

A key way we're trying to change this is mandatory training on learning disability and autism – in health as well as social care. So, that's something we're already piloting.

It's yet another example of where we need to get to: a workforce that thinks and acts in a truly joined-up way.

This takes me to the third and final area I want to reflect on today: our incredible workforce.

Yesterday afternoon, the Prime Minister had the honour of hosting a reception at Downing Street attended by 50 front-line care workers. I think it's so important that people like him – and me – are recognising this incredible career path.

I think the pandemic has been an important turning point for social care. It's been the moment when the British public has truly begun to grasp the hardship and heroism that comes from a career in care.

We're now watching it on our TV screens, with Ed Balls' new programme on BBC iPlayer. And we're seeing it in advert breaks too, with our 'Made with Care' TV Campaign.

I think the adverts get it right. The energy. The variety. The rewards.

And I want to congratulate everyone involved with that campaign, because it's an important one. It's estimated there will be almost half a million extra job opportunities in adult social care by 2035 – with more than 100,000 current vacancies to be filled.

It's right that we're putting huge amounts of energy into getting many more talented and dedicated people into the sector. But equally, I'm determined for us to retain the brilliant people we already have.

Those of you who've watched that Ed Balls documentary will remember someone called Cameron. We saw how, even at only 19, Cameron had a natural gift for care. But knowing there's no clear career path for him has meant he's looking at a career as a paramedic or a nurse. We need to hold on to people like Cameron.

So we will invest at least half a billion pounds into the social care workforce over the next three years. Some of those funds will help us deliver new qualifications and better career routes in care.

We're also directing funds into stronger mental health and wellbeing support for care staff, because colleagues can't care for people unless we care for colleagues.

I feel confident about the social care workforce in the long-term – but of

course, I do recognise the challenges we face in the short-term – particularly the challenges of the winter ahead.

I know that vaccination as a condition of deployment is an emotive issue. I do get that. I'm clear that the first duty of anyone working in health and care is to avoid preventable harm to the people they care for. And the second duty, of course, is to keep one another safe, so they can keep doing their vital work.

I do recognise the challenges providers face to recruit and retain staff, and I'm going to keep working closely with you on all these workforce pressures this winter and beyond.

But our £162.5 million Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund (WRRF) is making a difference. It's helping local authorities work with providers to boost staffing and support existing care workers through the coming months.

We've also got our Winter Plan. It learns the lessons of Sir David Pearson's review of last year's plan. It's backed by more than half a billion pounds of funding. And it's a product of some hard work across local government, the NHS, care providers – and many of you. I'm especially grateful for this teamwork at this very challenging time.

In a moment, I'm going to take some of your questions. But before I do, let me just say this. I think this is a moment for major change in social care – change for the better. Just as the NHS was born out of the adversity of the Second World War, this new era for social care can be a bright and exciting antidote to this dark and difficult period.

It won't be easy, of course. But nothing worth doing ever is. But by boosting funding, promoting integration and cherishing our workforce, I believe we can make a change that lasts generations and stands the test of time.

Thank you all very much.

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## [OSCE report on combating trafficking in human beings: UK response](#)

Dear Madam Chair,

Thank you, Special Representative Richie, for preparing this report and for you and your team's work in this important area.

We share your prioritisation of the 4 major challenges in the global fight against trafficking in human beings – on impunity, protection of victims, the scale of the problem, and political will.

No one country can eliminate forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking alone. There must be a coordinated and sustained international effort to tackle this heinous crime. Tackling forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking should be, and indeed must be, a top global policy priority. And not just for governments, but also businesses, society and all of us as individuals. We welcome the supportive role the OSCE and your Office plays on shining a spotlight on this issue and supporting capacity and capability building by participating States.

On impunity, we have worked in the UK to provide law enforcement agencies with the tools they need to tackle modern slavery. This includes a maximum life sentence for perpetrators, and support for the police to increase modern slavery prosecutions. Raising awareness of modern slavery helps equip the public and frontline professionals with the knowledge to spot signs of modern slavery and report concerns.

Ensuring victims get the support they need and ensuring that survivors are empowered, requires us doing more to build the evidence base to better understand drivers and vulnerabilities in different sectors and country contexts. The [Alliance conference by your Office this year](#), with its focus on demand, provided very useful insight on this issue. With a greater understanding of the drivers of modern slavery, we can employ more tools and tactics in the fight.

In the UK, we have a National Referral Mechanism which identifies and supports potential victims of modern slavery by connecting them with appropriate support. The UK government has also partnered with the Salvation Army to provide adult victims in England and Wales with specialist support. This includes safehouse accommodation, financial support and assistance in accessing health care and legal advice.

We recognise that women and girls are disproportionately affected by modern slavery and human trafficking, and that common themes of violence against women and girls include exploitation, coercion, control and abuse.

We agree with the focus of increasing transparency in supply chains, and are pleased to be able to continue funding your Office's project in this area.

We have taken steps to address forced labour through public procurement. In March 2020, we published [the world's first government modern slavery statement](#). Government departments will publish annual modern slavery statements, starting from this month. Since the beginning of this year, most new central government procurement contracts need to take account of 'social value criteria', such as reducing modern slavery risks. The Modern Slavery Assessment Tool was launched to implement effective due diligence and training, provided to commercial staff.

Additionally, there is now a requirement on businesses with a turnover of £36 million or more to publish an annual modern slavery statement, outlining the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

We agree with multilateral solutions to address this problem. At the G7 meeting this year, leaders committed to prevent, identify, and eliminate forced labour in global supply chains. We also encourage all States to join the [Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking](#). We support the Inter Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons and support further coordination among international organisations to ensure as comprehensive approach to preventing and combating trafficking in persons, including protection and support for survivors, as possible.

Once again may I offer my appreciation for the work you Mr Richey and your team have done over the past year. We look forward to continuing to work together on this important issue in 2022 and beyond. Thank you.

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## [Oil and gas consultation in East Yorkshire](#)

Press release

Rathlin Energy (UK) Limited applies to Environment Agency for permission to put exploratory oil and gas drill site at West Newton into commercial production.



The company has operated at West Newton in East Yorkshire since 2013 under the conditions of an environmental permit. It now seeks to vary that permit to allow for the creation of six additional wells, the relocation of oil storage facilities and the installation of gas engines that will produce electricity for export to the National Grid.

The Environment Agency is now seeking views from the local community and interested groups on the application. The consultation will run from Thursday 25 November 2021 to Friday 7 January 2022 and will include a virtual drop-in session. This drop-in session will provide further details about the application, the Environment Agency's decision process and provide

opportunities for the public to ask questions about the company's plans.

[Further information about the virtual drop-in is available online](#)

## **Environmental permit required to operate**

Rathlin Energy has previously applied to East Riding of Yorkshire Council for planning consent in relation to the proposed production, which was refused. The Environment Agency is obliged to determine the environmental permit variation application separately to Planning, but the company is required to have both planning and environmental permitting approved before operations can commence.

Mining and extractive industries must have an environmental permit to operate. Issued by the Environment Agency, environmental permits detail the conditions that an operator is required to meet to ensure its activities minimise the risk of harm to people and the environment.

Kathryn Richardson, Area Environment Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

We know the community has strong feelings about the potential for oil and gas drilling in West Newton, so we are seeking their views as part of our consultation and offering them an opportunity to learn more at a virtual drop-in session.

In assessing this permit variation, we will undertake a detailed and rigorous assessment of Rathlin Energy's application. We will ensure the operating techniques and control measures at the proposed facility will comply with the legal requirements of the Environment Permitting Regulations. We do not permit activities that pose an unacceptable risk.

Our regulatory controls for the onshore oil and gas industry are in place to protect people and the environment. We may only refuse a permit application if it does not meet one or more of the legal requirements under environmental legislation, including if it will have an unacceptable impact on the environment or harm human health. If all the requirements are met, we are legally obliged to issue a permit.

We welcome comments from the public and interested groups on local environmental factors that people feel are important."

[The application documents are available to view online from today \(Thursday 25 November 2021\)](#)

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## Northern creek network at Lower Otter site nearly complete



The northern creek network

- Northern creek network largely finished
- Channels are reconnecting to historic floodplain
- The work is creating new wildlife habitats

Excavation of the network at the northern end of the site – north of South Farm Road – is now largely completed. Next spring, creeks will be excavated in the south of the site, connecting to the north under the new South Farm Road bridge.

Together, the total excavated length of the creek network already exceeds 3 kilometres. These will evolve naturally over time once connected to the Otter. One of the islands on the floodplain is also nearing completion, this will act as a refuge for birds at high tide.

Dan Boswell, Environment Agency project manager for the site, said:

When the creeks are all complete we will have a network that will reconnect the estuary to its historic floodplain.

The creeks will be the 'veins' of the estuary, bringing new life to the valley floor, attracting a wide variety of wildlife to the wetland habitat and enabling floodwater to drain down more quickly.

The Lower Otter Restoration Project is part of the €26 million Promoting Adaptation to Changing Coasts (PACCo) project, which also has a similar scheme underway in the Saône Valley in Normandy, France.

In Devon it will see current grassland created during historic reclamation work replaced with 55 hectares of intertidal mudflat and saltmarsh, plus

almost 3 hectares of broadleaved woodland and 1.5 kilometres of hedgerow.

## Notes to editors

The French arm of the project, Basse Saône 2050, is in the Saône Valley in Normandy and includes building a new water treatment works and moving a campsite at Quiberville.

It is thought that up to 70 estuarine sites in northern France and southern England may benefit from the PACCo project, by following the model being used on the Lower Otter and Saône Valley.

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## [Home Secretary's speech on Channel drownings](#)

With permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a statement about the tragic drownings that took place in the Channel yesterday.

At least 27 people lost their lives. I know the whole House will join me in expressing our profound sorrow, and our thoughts are with the loved ones of those who have died, and with those who responded to an extremely distressing event.

Information is still being gathered about the situation in France as this becomes more and more clearer.

The Prime Minister chaired an emergency COBRA meeting last night and then spoke to the President of France.

I am glad that President Macron indicated his determination to stop the vile people-smuggling gangs and, importantly, to work closely with all partners across Europe.

I have literally, Madam Deputy Speaker, just spoken again with my French counterpart Minister Darmanin, and I have once again reached out and made my offer very clear to France in terms of joint France and UK co-operation, joint patrols to prevent these dangerous journeys from taking place.

I have offered to work with France to put more officers on the ground and do

absolutely whatever is necessary to secure the area so that vulnerable people do not risk their lives by getting into unseaworthy boats.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a global illegal migration crisis.

As I have stated many times, these journeys across the Channel are absolutely unnecessary, but also as I have been warning for two years, they are also lethally dangerous. What happened yesterday was a dreadful shock. It was not a surprise but it is also a reminder of how vulnerable people are put at peril when in the hands of criminal gangs.

There is also, Madam Deputy Speaker, no quick fix. This is about addressing long-term pull factors, smashing the criminal gangs that treat human beings as cargo, and tackling supply chains.

This requires co-ordinated international effort and I have been in constant contact with my counterparts from France, Poland, Austria, Belgium, Italy, and Greece to name just a few.

Because of the nature of the crisis and the fact that we are seeing 80 million displaced people in the world, this was of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, a major theme of discussion at the G7 Interior Ministers back in September.

We are also seeing it play out on several land borders in Europe and in the Mediterranean Sea, and given the chance, the traffickers will always find people to exploit and manipulate – some of them do not even know they are coming to the UK.

This does mean tackling issues upstream and not waiting until people have reached EU countries, and I have always been extremely clear that I want to co-operate, and am co-operating, with international colleagues.

The United Kingdom has given its unflinching and generous support to France to end this terrible trade in people smuggling.

We are not working just to end these crossings because we don't care and we're heartless. The United Kingdom has a clear and a generous, humane approach to asylum seekers and refugees.

Yes, people should come here legally and the system must be fair, but the main issue is this: crossing the Channel in small boats is extremely dangerous and yesterday was the moment that many of us had feared for many years.

The criminals that facilitate these journeys are motivated by self-interest and profit, not by compassion. They threaten, intimidate, bully, and assault the people who get into these boats, and they have a complete absolute disregard for human right.

They use the money they make for other heinous crimes, and we simply have to break their business model and, of course, bring them to justice.

The government's New Plan for Immigration, which will be put into law through the Nationality and Borders Bill is a longer-term solution that will address many of these underlying factors to deterring illegal migration and addressing underlying pull factors into the UK's asylum system.

It will bring in a range of measures, including:

the one-stop appeals process;

the ability to process claims outside the country;

the ability to declare inadmissibility to our asylum system and have differentiation for those who arrive in the UK having passed through safe countries; and

life sentences for people-smugglers.

People should, Madam Deputy Speaker, claim asylum in the first safe country they reach, and nobody needs to flee France in order to be safe.

However, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are not waiting until the Nationality and Borders Bill passes. We are undertaking a wide range of operational and diplomatic work.

I have already approved maritime tactics – including boat turn-arounds – for Border Force to deploy.

The government, the police, the National Crime Agency, are taking action at every level to take down the people-smuggling gangs. Once again, however, we cannot do it alone.

We continue to work closely with the French to prevent crossings. More than 20,000 have been stopped this year, which I think all member of this House should recognise the magnitude and the scale of the illegal migration crisis that we are seeing. We have dismantled 17 organised criminal groups and secured over 400 arrests and 65 convictions.

But this crisis continues, clearly demonstrating we need to do more, together. This is a complicated issue and there is no simple fix.

It does mean a Herculean effort and will be impossible without close co-operation between all international partners and agencies.

I also urge colleagues to reconsider their opposition to the Nationality and Borders Bill because it is an essential element in finding a long-term solution to what is, Madam Deputy Speaker, a long-term problem that successive governments have faced over decades.

As we mourn those who have died in the most horrendous of circumstances, I hope that the whole House can come together to send a clear message that crossing the Channel in this lethal way, in a small boat, is not the way to come to our country.

It is, of course, unnecessary, illegal, and desperately unsafe.

I commend this statement to the House.