

The General Synod of the Church of England has called on the Government to set up a Royal Commission on how health and social care can be funded and delivered in the next two decades.

Members unanimously supported a motion brought by the Diocese of Carlisle today, endorsing a House of Lords report on the future of the NHS.

The report, Long-term Sustainability of the NHS and Adult Social Care, (published last April) made over 30 recommendations on areas relating to integration of services - particularly of health and social services, patient responsibility, and funding.

An amendment to the motion, moved by Carl Hughes (Diocese of Southwark) added a call for the Government to establish a Royal Commission to consider how the UK's health and social care needs could be met in the period up to 2040, amid changes in life expectancy, population and technology.

A further amendment moved by Alison Coulter (Winchester) voiced "heartfelt gratitude" to NHS and social care staff – and called on churches to pray for them.

A third amendment was adopted, tabled by Jane Patterson (Sheffield), urging churches to "lead by example in showing Christian compassion" to the elderly and vulnerable in their communities.

The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, who worked for 30 years in the NHS and was the Government's Chief Nursing Officer, was among those who spoke in the debate.

She said: "Despite its challenges I've seen some of the best care in the world.

"In this year when we celebrate the 70th anniversary I would like to pay tribute to those who had courage to establish it but also to those who continue to work within it.

"Those who provide care today in the NHS add the tenderness to a £116 billion organisation.

"The NHS, for me, reflects our compassion as a society; caring for people regardless of their ability to pay at some of the most vulnerable moments in their life."

She added: "Over the coming years the NHS will continue to be under more pressure: we grow older; our population increases; our expectations rise and research and technology will give us very hard decisions.

"I believe it is only sustainable if the belief in that common good remains at the heart of our society; it is only sustainable if you and I commit to a sense of solidarity of action – communities nationally but also churches acting together."

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Members voted as follows:

- For – 267
- Against – 0
- Abstentions - 0

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