

GENERAL SYNOD

DIOCESAN SYNOD MOTION

Long-term Sustainability of the National Health Service

Summary

This motion calls upon the Government to implement the recommendations contained in the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the Long-term Sustainability of the NHS and Adult Social Care.

The Carlisle Diocesan Synod Motion

1. The Carlisle Diocesan Synod motion was prompted, in part, by local issues with the provision of health services by the NHS in Cumbria but in this motion we have attempted to rise above those local issues (other than where they may be symptomatic of more general problems experienced in rural areas) and address the key issue of the long-term sustainability of the National Health Service.
2. It is particularly appropriate that this motion is being brought to Synod by Carlisle Diocese as the Bishop of Carlisle is the lead Bishop on health issues in the House of Lords and was a member of the Select Committee on the Long-term Sustainability of the NHS and Adult Social Care.
3. Our motion is centred on the report of that committee¹ which was published in April 2017 and which is still awaiting Government response and debate. This is an enormously important report on an enormously important topic. One of the key things that it does is to try and take the politics out of the Health Service, calling for a long-term cross-party approach.
4. Clause 1 of the motion welcomes and commends the report.
5. Clause 2 calls upon the Government to implement the recommendations of the Select Committee – a general election and Brexit have intervened and we have no wish to see the report simply gather dust on a shelf. We believe that it is crucially important to pressure the Government to take up this important challenge.
6. In bringing this motion we want to resist special pleading for Cumbria but 2(a) does ask that particular consideration be given to the problems associated with applying urban models of strategic care in the rural context. One size truly does not fit all.
7. The motion does not talk about the level of funding for the NHS, in part because we are not qualified to do so and would not therefore be listened to, but also because a number of other problems need to be tackled first in order to take a serious view of the long-term financial needs of the NHS. One of these is touched on in 2(b): there is evidence that the problems in funding social care are having a disproportionate effect on the NHS, both in terms of its capacity and in terms of its costs. The report, however, does have things to say about the level of funding and provides recommendations linked directly to the need for long-term sustainability.

¹ *The Long-term Sustainability of the NHS and Adult Social Care* published 5 April 2017 and available at: <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/ldnhssus/151/151.pdf>.

8. Clause 2(c) asks that particular consideration is also given to the problems associated with the recruitment of experienced and highly qualified health professionals outside the larger urban centres.
9. We have chosen not to 'cherry pick' the report or to emphasise particular aspects of it. We believe that it is a very significant piece of work and we would ask the members of General Synod to support this motion as it stands and to urge the Government and all political parties to come behind it and its recommendations.
10. Our motion is in no sense a criticism of our National Health Service and the people who work in it, a service that is deeply loved and appreciated by the overwhelming majority of people in this Country (whatever their political persuasion). Our wish is that we can ensure its existence and flourishing in the long-term with longer-range planning divorced from the lifetime of individual Parliaments.
11. But let us all remember the part that we as individuals can play in taking pressure off the NHS by taking much more responsibility for our lifestyle and our health.

The Report of the Select Committee

12. It is to be hoped that all members of Synod will have had the opportunity to read the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the Long-term Sustainability of the NHS and Adult Social Care.
13. The Select Committee began work in June 2016 and received 192 written submissions, heard from over 100 witnesses in oral witness sessions and received over 3,000 letters and emails from members of the public.
14. The resultant report is an impressive piece of work that provides clear evidence of the depth and breadth of research, listening, analysis and thought that has gone into it. We would strongly recommend everyone with an interest in the subject matter (which surely should include just about everyone) to read it in its entirety.
15. The first paragraph of the opening summary sets the scene: "A culture of short-termism seems to prevail in the NHS and adult social care. The short-sightedness of successive governments is reflected in a Department of Health that is unable or unwilling to think beyond the next few years. The Department of Health, over a number of years, has failed in this regard. Almost everyone involved in the health service and social care system seems to be absorbed by the day-to-day struggles, leaving the future to 'take care of itself'. A new consensus on the future of the health and care system is desperately needed and this should emerge as a result of Government-initiated cross-party talks and a robust national conversation".
16. The opening paragraph of the introduction to the report poses the questions: "How can we retain the basic principles of the NHS: healthcare largely free-at-the-point-of-use, for all citizens? How can we secure an adult social care system which meets the needs of a rapidly changing population? Ultimately can we get beyond today and envisage a long-term future for an integrated health and care service?".. The second paragraph states: "Our conclusion could not be clearer. Is the NHS and adult social care system sustainable? Yes, it is. Is it sustainable as it is today? No, it is not. Things need to change".
17. The report, which runs to 134 pages, surveys and analyses the evidence presented to the Select Committee, drawing conclusions from that evidence. It makes 34

recommendations – all of which deserve, at the very least, serious consideration as a matter of some urgency.

18. This document cannot hope to adequately precis and weigh up the conclusions and recommendations of the report – and nor should it. We would, however, urge members of Synod to read the report in full and to ponder on it.

The Need for this Motion

19. The report of the Select Committee was published last April and would appear to have received no attention from either the Government or Parliament.
20. We believe that the need for this motion is clear. Events have been allowed to sideline an immensely important piece of work that has repercussions for everyone in this country. Now is the time to challenge the Government to be seen to be taking this report seriously to help ensure that this country has a truly sustainable health service and adult social care system that meets the needs of all its citizens.
21. We ask members of Synod not only to give their backing to this motion but also to put pressure on their Members of Parliament to ensure that it is given the consideration that it needs and demands.

Dr Chris Angus (Carlisle)
Rt Revd James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle
On behalf of the Diocese of Carlisle

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