

CRISIS IN CARE WHAT DO MPs THINK?

1.4 MILLION PEOPLE ARE LEFT
TO STRUGGLE EACH DAY WITHOUT
THE SUPPORT OF SOCIAL CARE



The NHS Confederation leads Health for Care, a coalition of 15 national health organisations who have joined forces to make the case for a sustainable social care system, backed up by a long-term funding settlement.

We're calling for the government to deliver a sustainable social care system in England, backed up by a long-term financial settlement.

Find out more at

nhsconfed.org/healthforcare

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How we pay for and provide care and support to people in England is one of the greatest unresolved challenges this country faces, as more than one million people are forced to struggle every day without the care they need.

Unlocking a solution to the social care crisis will require political leadership and, ideally, a cross-party consensus. Successive governments have failed to address this issue and the current Government has been promising to bring forward proposals in a green paper for more than two years, but that has yet to materialise. To inform government thinking ahead of the green paper and the expected spending review in autumn 2019, our Health for Care coalition wanted to test the views of MPs on whether they believe there is a crisis in social care, whether they have noticed an increase in their constituency casework regarding social care, and what options for reform they would favour.

We commissioned independent polling company ComRes to survey a representative sample of MPs¹ between the end of March and the middle of May 2019. A summary of the key findings is as follows:

- Three quarters of MPs (76%) agree there is a crisis in social care, with over a third (35%) strongly agreeing that this is the case. This includes more than half (58%) of Conservative MPs.
- Six in ten MPs (60%) believe their constituents are suffering because of cuts in social care. However, there is a significant difference across political parties, with a third of Conservative MPs (32%) saying this compared to 94 per cent of Labour MPs.
- Two thirds of MPs (65%) say their social care casework has increased during their time in office, with nearly half (46%) saying it has increased significantly.
- Two thirds of MPs (67%) agree that funding social care effectively is a priority for the government, but this drops to 42 per cent for Labour MPs.
- There is little faith among MPs that the green paper will improve standards of social care provision – only half (49%) agree it will. Again, there is a big split along party lines with 82 per cent of Conservative MPs believing it will improve provision and just 10 per cent of Labour MPs.
- While there is consensus among MPs about there being a crisis in social care, politicians are evenly split in their support for different reform options – although there is little backing for the introduction of a hypothecated tax.
- MPs are evenly split across four potential solutions, with each attracting about a fifth of MPs' support: introducing free personal care (21%); an auto-enrolment insurance system (20%); a cap on costs and a revised 'floor' to the means test – a variant of the Dilnot proposal² (19%); and improving the current system (18%).
- Broken down by the two main political parties, Conservative MPs are most likely to support the option of an auto-enrolment insurance system (30%) and Labour MPs are most likely to support the introduction of free personal care (40%).

In summary, the most striking elements of our research has been the sheer number of MPs who agree there is a crisis in social care, alongside the vast numbers who have noticed a significant increase in social care cases raised by their constituents. However, there is a marked lack of consensus on the potential options for reform.

BACKGROUND

The adult social care system in England is facing enormous difficulties – our most vulnerable people are being left without the care and support they need and providers of services are stretched to breaking point.

In the last decade the demand for social care has risen while there has been a 10 per cent real terms cut in funding between 2009–10 and 2016–17.³

Local authorities received 1.84 million requests for social care support from new clients in 2017/18 – 33,000 more than in 2015/16.⁴ These are often for basic tasks such as getting in and out of bed or bathing.

Yet vast swathes of people are not getting the support they depend on: according to figures from Age UK, there are at least 1.4 million⁵ older people with unmet care needs. The failure to amend the means test threshold since 2010/11⁶ to account for inflation means that fewer people will be able to access care funded by their local authority.

In addition, in recent months we have seen providers of services collapse into administration, and many more battling to continue to provide a service. In the ADASS Budget Survey 2018, three quarters (74%) of directors of adult social services said services in their area were facing financial difficulties and many councils reported providers ceasing trading or handing back contracts.⁷

These facts underline the need to find a long-term, sustainable solution to social care – this will make a vital difference to so many of our most vulnerable people and their families and carers. Without a solution, people will continue to miss out on the support they need, and pressure will mount on other public services such as the NHS. Indeed, the ambitions of the NHS Long Term Plan will not be achieved without a sustainable social care system.

Finding a solution to the social care crisis will require political leadership and, ideally, a cross-party consensus. However, the prospect of this being achieved looks slim. It is now more than two years since the Government pledged to release a social care green paper (meant as a blueprint for fixing the crisis). Despite best intentions this is an issue that all governments have failed to address for decades.

That is why the NHS Confederation has brought 15 national health organisations together to make the case for extra funding and reform to deliver a sustainable social care system.

POLLING

We commissioned the independent polling company ComRes to carry out research with Members of Parliament to examine their views on current provision within the social care sector, whether they have noticed a change in their constituency casework regarding social care, and what options for reform they would favour.

Between 27 March and 10 May 2019, ComRes surveyed 138 MPs through a combination of online and self-completion paper surveys. The responses included 51 Conservative MPs, 66 Labour MPs, 12 SNP and nine MPs from other parties. Data has been weighted by party and region to be representative of the House of Commons.

KEY FINDINGS

**THREE QUARTERS OF MPs
(76%) AGREE THERE IS
A CRISIS IN SOCIAL
CARE. THIS INCLUDES
MORE THAN HALF (58%)
OF CONSERVATIVE MPs**

PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL CARE

Three quarters of MPs say there is a crisis in social care, with over a third strongly agreeing that this is the case.

Three quarters of MPs (76%) agree that there is a crisis in social care, including over a third (35%) who strongly agree. One in five (18%) disagree.

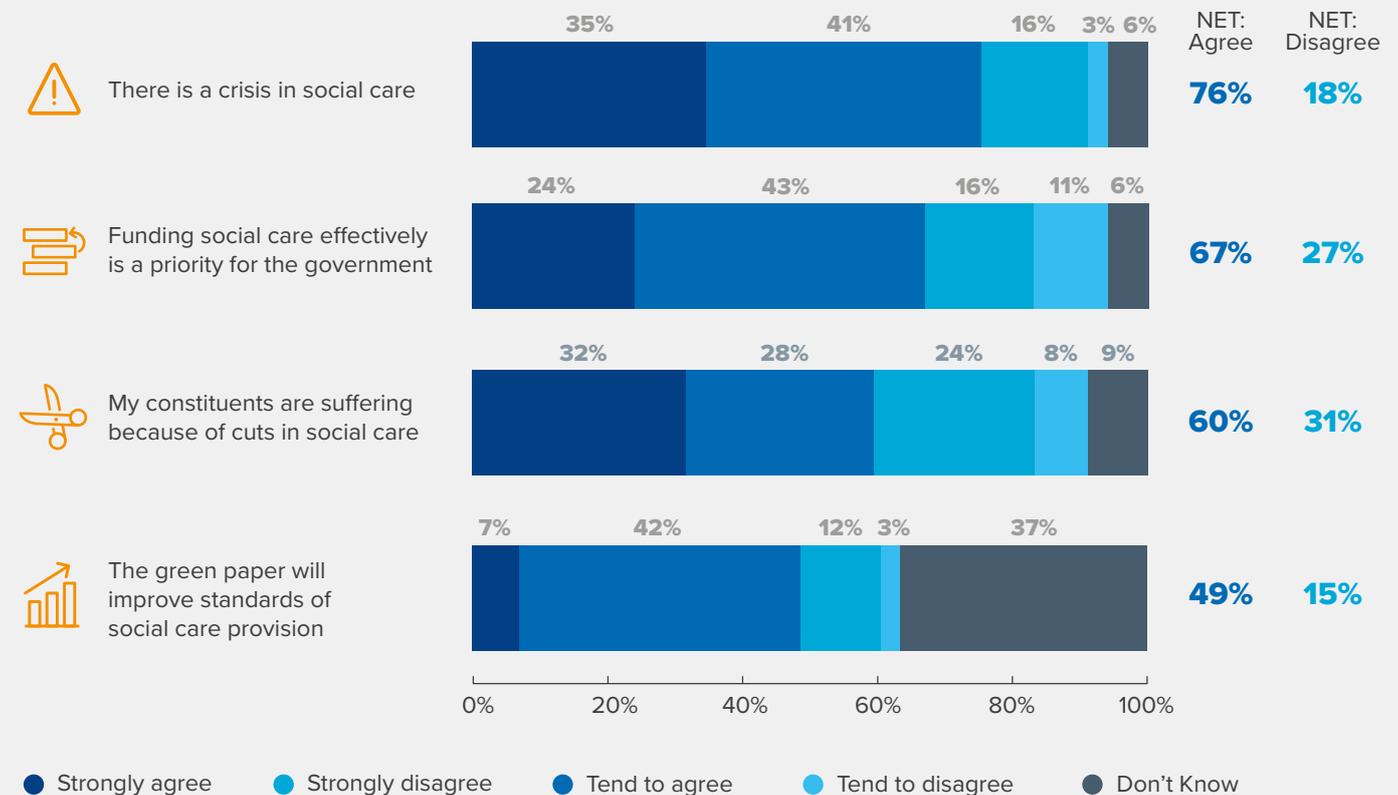
Two thirds of MPs (67%) agree that funding social care effectively is a priority for the government, while just over a quarter (27%) disagree.

There is uncertainty over whether the green paper will improve standards of social care provision, with half of MPs (49%) agreeing that it will improve standards but nearly two in five (37%) saying they don't know.

Three in five MPs (60%) believe their constituents are suffering due to cuts in social care, compared with three in ten (31%) that disagree.

Perceptions of social care – Overall

Showing % of MPs who say the following



Q3. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base: All MPs (n=138)

**THREE IN FIVE MPs
(60%) BELIEVE THEIR
CONSTITUENTS ARE
SUFFERING DUE TO CUTS
IN SOCIAL CARE**

**PERCEPTIONS
OF SOCIAL CARE**
CONTINUED

Over nine in ten Labour MPs say there is a crisis in social care and believe their constituents are suffering because of cuts in social care.

While the majority of MPs from both of the major parties agree there is a crisis in social care, Labour MPs are significantly more likely to do so than their Conservative counterparts (95% vs. 57%, respectively). While a third of Conservative MPs (35%) disagree that there is a crisis, just 1 per cent of Labour MPs say the same.

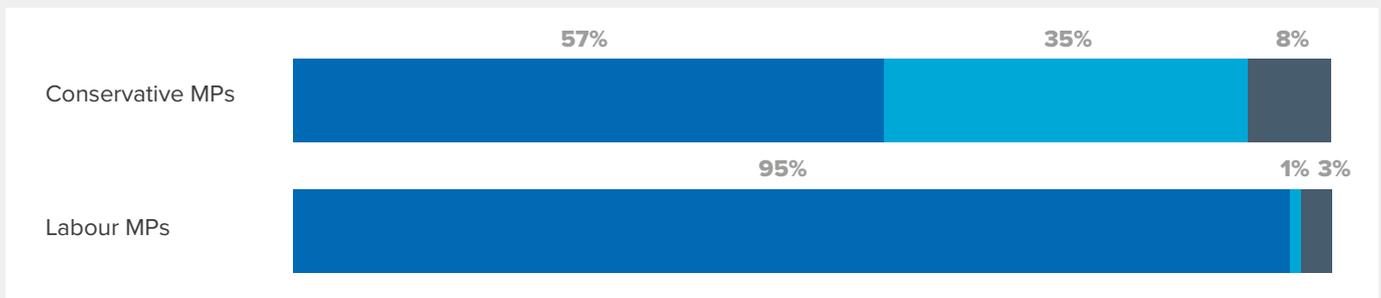
Labour MPs are also significantly more likely than Conservative MPs to say their constituents are suffering due to cuts in social care (94% vs. 32%, respectively). More than half of Conservative MPs (55%) disagree that their constituents are suffering due to cuts in social care, but only 3 per cent of Labour MPs say they disagree with the statement.

Perceptions of social care – by Party

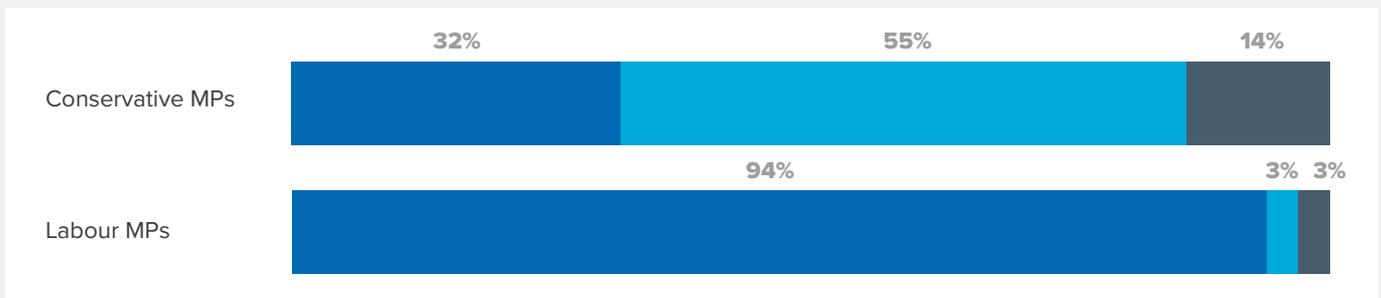
Showing % of MPs who say the following



There is a crisis in social care



My constituents are suffering because of cuts in social care



● NET: Agree ● NET: Disagree ● Don't Know

Q3. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base: All Conservative MPs (n=51); all Labour MPs (n=66)

**PERCEPTIONS
OF SOCIAL CARE**
CONTINUED

Conservative MPs are significantly more likely than Labour MPs to agree that the green paper will improve standards of social care provision.

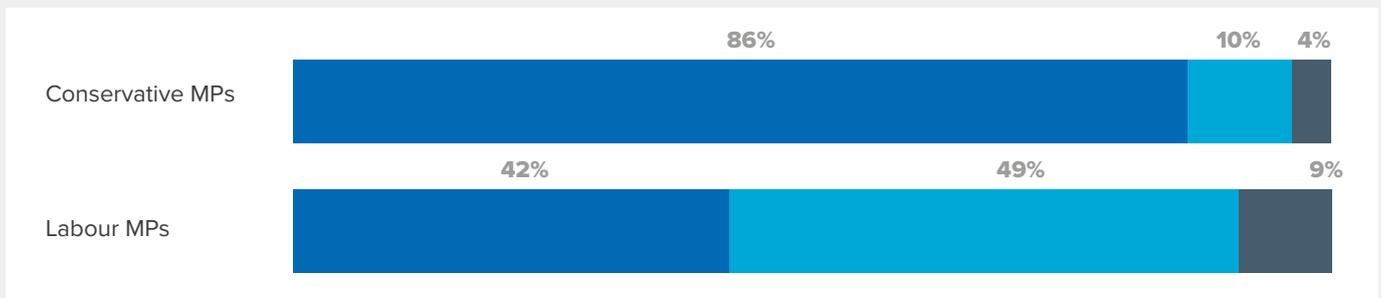
Four in five Conservative MPs (82%) agree that the green paper will improve standards of social care provision, with 2 per cent in disagreement. By comparison, just one in ten Labour MPs (10%) agree it will improve standards, while a third (32%) disagree. There is uncertainty amongst Labour MPs regarding the green paper’s potential impact to improve standards of social care provision, with three in five (58%) reporting that they don’t know whether or not it will improve standards.

Conservative MPs are also significantly more likely than Labour MPs to agree that funding social care effectively is a priority for the government (86% vs. 42%, respectively). Half of Labour MPs (49%) disagree that it is a priority for the government, compared to one in ten Conservative MPs (10%).

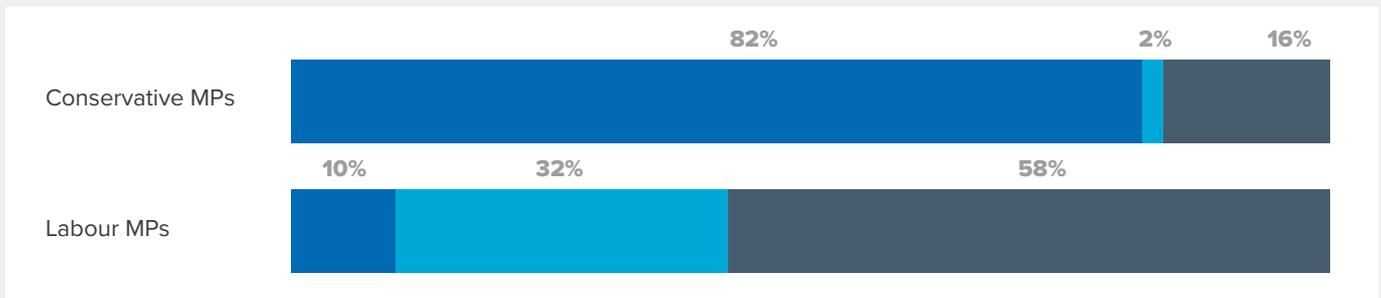
Perceptions of social care – by Party

Showing % of MPs who say the following

 Funding social care effectively is a priority for the government



 The green paper will improve standards of social care provision



● NET: Agree ● NET: Disagree ● Don't Know

Q3. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Base: All Conservative MPs (n=51); all Labour MPs (n=66).

**SOCIAL CARE
CASEWORK**

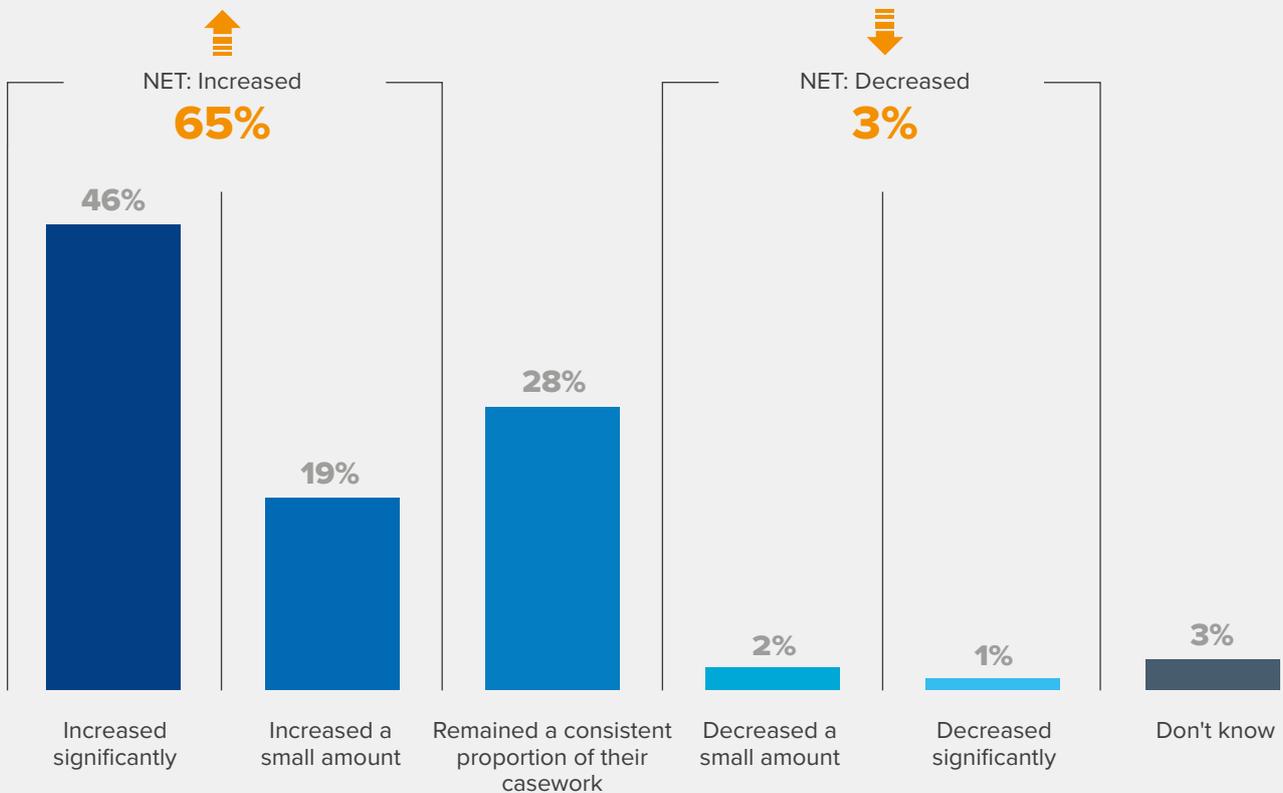
Two thirds of MPs say their social care casework has increased during their time in office.

Nearly half of MPs (46%) say their constituency casework regarding social care has increased significantly during their time in office.

Three in ten MPs (28%) say social care has remained a consistent proportion of their casework, while just 3 per cent of MPs say it has decreased. 3 per cent say they don't know if it has changed.

Change in social care casework – Overall

Showing % of MPs who say the following



Q1. Thinking back over the time you have been in office, would you say that you have noticed your constituency casework regarding social care matters has... Base: All MPs (n=138)

**SOCIAL CARE
CASEWORK
CONTINUED**

Labour MPs are significantly more likely than Conservative MPs to say their social care casework has increased during their time in office.

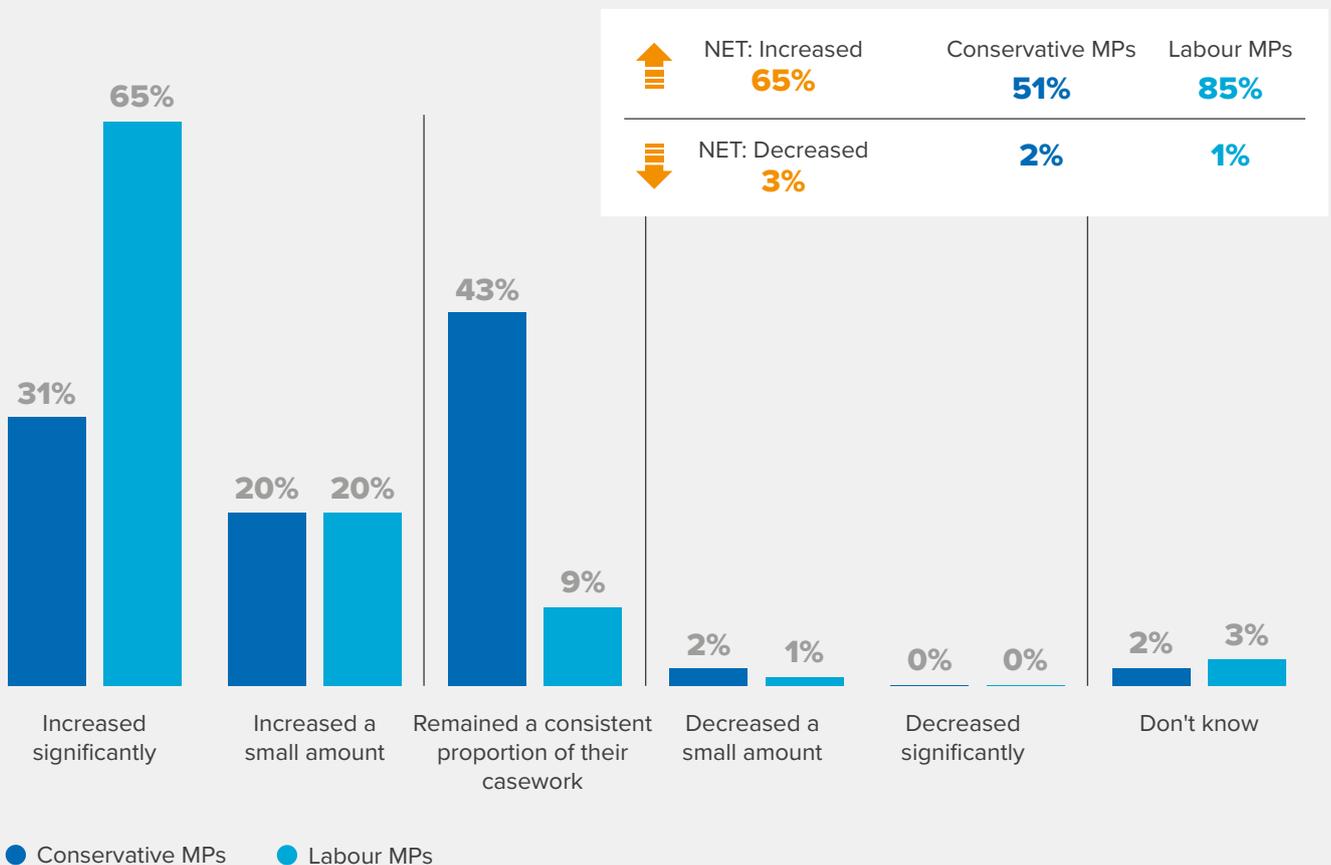
More than four in five Labour MPs (85%) say their social care constituency casework has increased during their time in office, compared to half of Conservative MPs (51%) that say the same. More than double the proportion of Labour MPs than Conservative MPs (65% vs. 31%, respectively) say it has increased significantly.

Two in five Conservative MPs (43%) say their social care casework has remained consistent, with fewer than one in ten Labour MPs (9%) saying the same.

Almost no Labour or Conservative MPs say their social care casework has decreased (2% and 1%, respectively).

Change in social care casework – by Party

Showing % of MPs who say the following



Q1. Thinking back over the time you have been in office, would you say that you have noticed your constituency casework regarding social care matters has... Base: All Conservative MPs (n=51); all Labour MPs (n=66)

**SOCIAL CARE
GREEN PAPER**

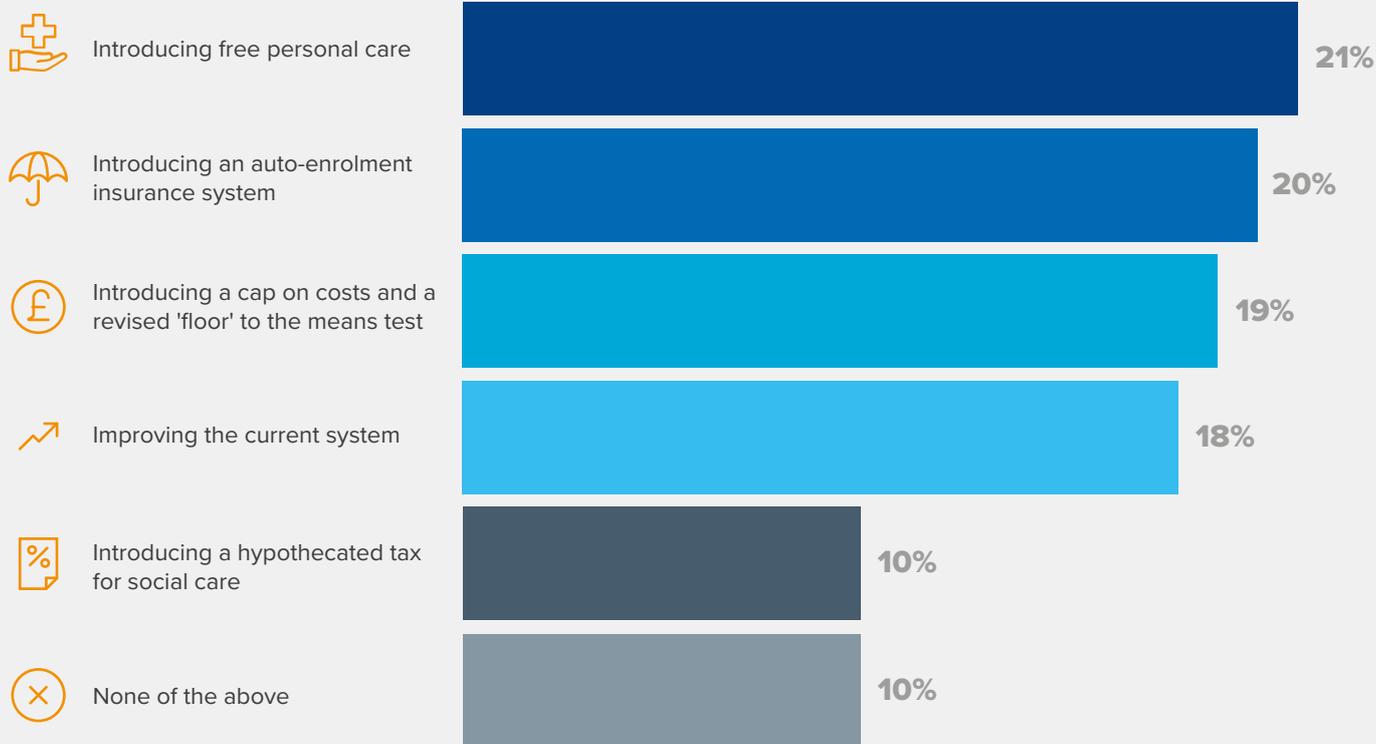
MPs are evenly split in their support for different social care green paper funding options, apart from the less popular hypothecated tax.

Around one in five MPs say they most support introducing free personal care (21%); an auto-enrolment insurance system (20%); a cap on costs and revised 'floor' to the means test (19%); and improving the current system (18%).

One in ten MPs (10%) say they most support a hypothecated tax for social care, making it the least popular proposal tested. One in ten MPs (10%) support none of the options tested.

Most supported social care green paper funding options – Overall

Showing % of MPs who say the following



Q2. The government is expected to publish a social care green paper in the coming months. Of the five most likely funding options the green paper is likely to propose, which of the following options would you be most supportive of? Base: All MPs (n=138)

**SOCIAL CARE
GREEN PAPER**
CONTINUED

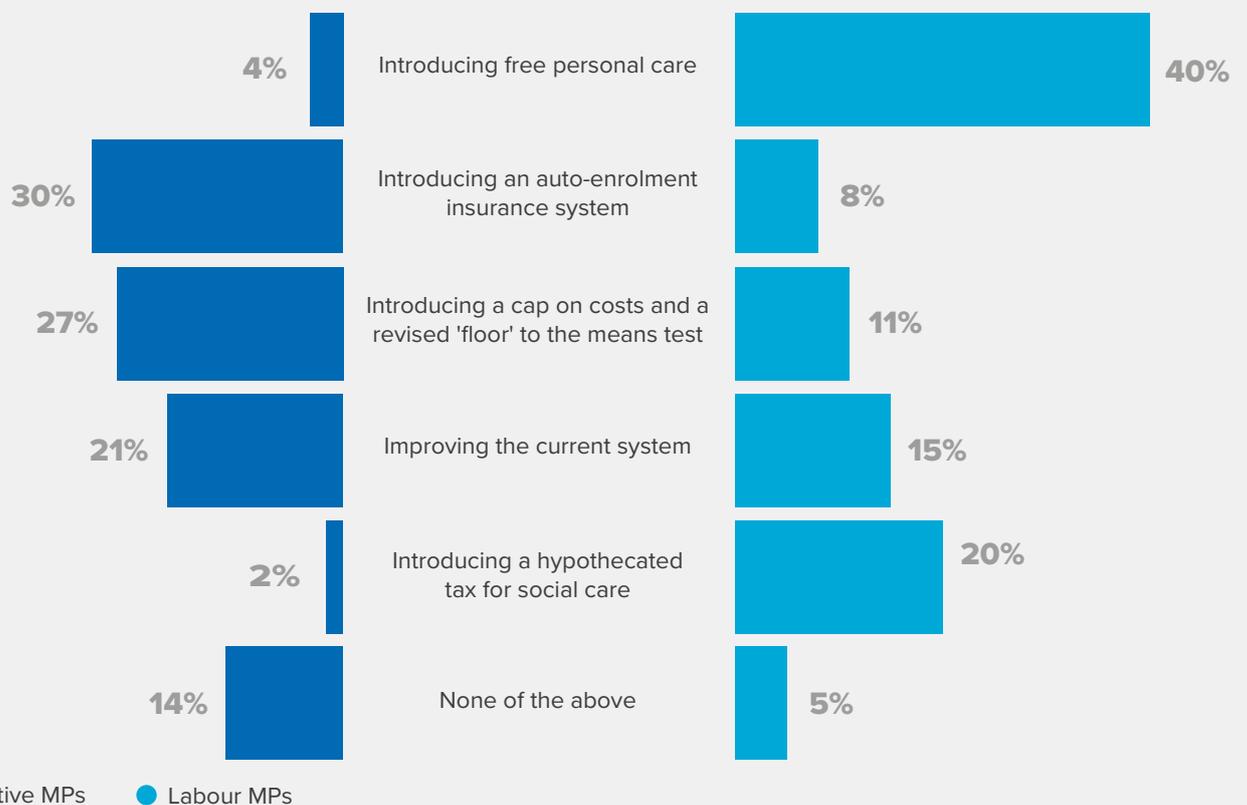
Labour and Conservative MPs are most divided on support for proposals concerning free personal care and an auto-enrolment insurance system.

While two in five Labour MPs (40%) say they most support the social care green paper introducing free social care, just 4 per cent of Conservative MPs say the same. Labour MPs are also significantly more likely to most support a hypothecated tax for social care than Conservative MPs (20% vs. 2%, respectively).

Meanwhile, around one in three Conservative MPs say they are most likely to support an auto-enrolment insurance system (30%) and a cap on costs and revised 'floor' to the means test (27%), compared to around one in ten Labour MPs (8% and 11%, respectively).

Most supported social care green paper funding options – by Party

Showing % of MPs who say the following



Q2. The government is expected to publish a social care green paper in the coming months. Of the five most likely funding options the green paper is likely to propose, which of the following options would you be most supportive of? Base: All Conservative MPs (n=51); all Labour MPs (n=66)

CALL TO ACTION

**NOW IS THE TIME FOR
MPs OF ALL PARTIES TO
WORK TOGETHER WITH
THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL
CARE SECTORS TO
AGREE A SOLUTION**

CALL TO ACTION

The results of this survey of MPs reinforces the need for a solution to be found to the crisis in social care. It is striking the sheer number of MPs who agree there is a crisis in social care, alongside the vast numbers who have noticed a significant increase in social care problems and cases raised by their constituents.

Given the context of unmet need and struggling providers, it is vital that we see action soon. It is encouraging that a majority (67%) of MPs said funding social care is a priority for the government, including 86 per cent of Conservative MPs.

BUILDING CONSENSUS

The first half of 2019 has seen many reports and policy papers suggesting solutions to the social care crisis. This underlines the view that there are credible ideas for delivering a more sustainable system.

What is necessary now is a cross-party political consensus on the way forward. However, the results of this poll indicate this will not be straightforward, with political support spread across a various policy options.

Of the funding options likely to feature in the upcoming green paper, we see a fairly even split between support for introducing free personal care (21%); an auto-enrolment insurance system (20%); a cap on costs and revised 'floor' to the means test (19%); and improving the current system (18%).

However, along party lines there is even further difference in opinion. Labour MPs are much more likely than Conservatives to support the introduction of free social care (40% vs 4% respectively). While Conservative MPs are much more in favour than Labour MPs of an auto-enrolment insurance system (30% vs 8% respectively) or a cap on costs and a revised 'floor' to the means test (27% vs 11% respectively).

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NOW?

This survey makes clear the need for a sustainable social care system to be delivered. There is no doubt that finding a sustainable, long-term solution to how we pay for and provide care and support to our most vulnerable people is one of the greatest challenges we face as a country.

It is therefore imperative that the upcoming Spending Review in autumn 2019 is an opportunity to review funding for the social care system. Funding must increase by at least 3.9 per cent per year – this was a central recommendation of a report commissioned by the NHS Confederation and undertaken by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Health Foundation in 2018.⁸ This funding increase needs to be delivered alongside concrete plans from the government to address the social care workforce crisis and other factors that would lead to the creation of a more sustainable social care system.

Now is the time for MPs of all parties to work together with the health and social care sectors to agree a solution that ends the unfairness faced by record numbers of people left to struggle each day without the care and support they need.

We cannot allow such a critical domestic issue as this to be ignored.

ABOUT HEALTH FOR CARE

Health for Care has developed a set of nine principles upon which it believes a new social care system should be based. These nine principles state that a new social care system should:

1. Be integrated around the needs of those using the service, along with the needs of their family and carers.
2. Give maximum possible control to those receiving care, their families and their carers.
3. Support a diverse and stable market of providers capable of offering service users a choice of high quality, safe options within their community.
4. Support and value the social care workforce.
5. Put prevention at the heart of health and social care provision.
6. Provide citizens clear advice and guidance on what care and support is available, how to access it and how best they can plan for their futures in terms of social care provision.
7. Widen eligibility to receive care so that those with unmet or under-met need have access to appropriate support.
8. Fully recognise the contribution of social care to people's wellbeing, allowing social care to receive parity of esteem with the NHS.
9. Provide secure, long-term, sustainable funding at a level that ensures the system can effectively function and deliver outcomes that satisfy the above principles.

On 1 March 2019, the leaders of Health for Care's member organisations signed a joint letter to Prime Minister Theresa May. This letter called on the government to deliver a "sustainable social care system, backed by a new, long-term funding settlement" and gained coverage in the national media.

Our petition with 38 Degrees calls on the government to give social care the funding it needs. As of June 2019, it has obtained more than 125,000 signatures.

REFERENCES

1. ComRes, [Published polls](#), [online].
2. Commission of Funding of Care and Support (2011), [Fairer care funding: The report of the Commission on Funding of Care and Support](#), [online pdf].
3. Institute for Fiscal Studies and The Health Foundation (2018), [Securing the future: Funding health and social care to the 2030s](#), [online pdf], NHS Confederation.
4. The King's Fund, [Social care 360: Access](#), [online].
5. Age UK, [1.4 million older people aren't getting the care and support they need – a staggering increase of almost 20% in just two years](#), [online].
6. The King's Fund, [op cit](#).
7. 7. Directors of Adult Social Services, [ADASS budget survey 2018](#), [online pdf].
8. 8. Institute for Fiscal Studies and The Health Foundation (2018), [op cit](#).

HEALTH
FOR CARE

PLAN. REFORM. FUND. DELIVER.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Email victoria.fowler@nhsconfed.org
Visit nhsconfed.org/HealthForCare

#HEALTHFORCARE

Facebook
facebook.com/HealthForCareEN



Survey carried out by
www.comresglobal.com