Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

I agree with Norman Lamb on the need for cross-party working to achieve sustainable funding for both health and social care. As the hon. Lady will know, I have set out my concerns about the underfunding of social care in a letter to the Chancellor. Does she agree that it is not just about funding, however, but also about how we support and train our social care staff? Would she like to see further progress made on the recommendations of Camilla Cavendish about how we train and support our care staff to help to retain them as well as recruit them?

Barbara Keeley Shadow Minister (Mental Health and Social Care)

I agree, and that is why I started my speech by saying we should value the job our care staff do and we should train them properly; it should be a proper job with a proper career path. The care staff I met today were reduced to worrying about what they were being paid, however, simply because they were paid less than the minimum wage.

This is what six years of funding cuts to social care actually mean for people who need care and their carers: unmet needs for care; patients stuck in hospital, increasingly because they have to wait for a care home or a nursing home place; poor quality care in care homes, with one quarter of “inadequate” services unable to improve; poor quality home care, with more complaints being upheld by the ombudsman; more unpaid family carers having to step in to care; more unpaid family carers having to provide increased levels of care; and, without the right support, those family carers becoming isolated, burnt-out and unable to look after their own health. That is a disturbing deterioration in the state of social care. I want the Secretary of State to tell us whether he recognises the scale and seriousness of the issues I have outlined.

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