

Rt. Hon. Baroness Casey of
Blackstock DBE CB
Chair, Casey Commission on Adult
Social Care

Executive Leader
Harlow Council
Civic Centre
The Water Gardens
Harlow
Essex CM20 1WG
www.harlow.gov.uk

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Dear Baroness Casey,

I am writing to welcome your work as Chair of the Independent Commission into Adult Social Care and to highlight what I believe is now the single greatest risk to the successful implementation of your recommendations: the Government's programme of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The Prime Minister has rightly recognised that adult social care requires fundamental reform, and your Commission represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to design a system capable of meeting the challenges of the future. Your own assessment of the current system - as one characterised by fragmented accountability, chronic underfunding, workforce shortages and a persistent divide between health and social care - reflects the reality experienced every day by those responsible for delivering these services.

It is therefore deeply concerning that, before your Commission has concluded its work, Government is requiring local authorities to begin one of the largest structural reorganisations in local government history.

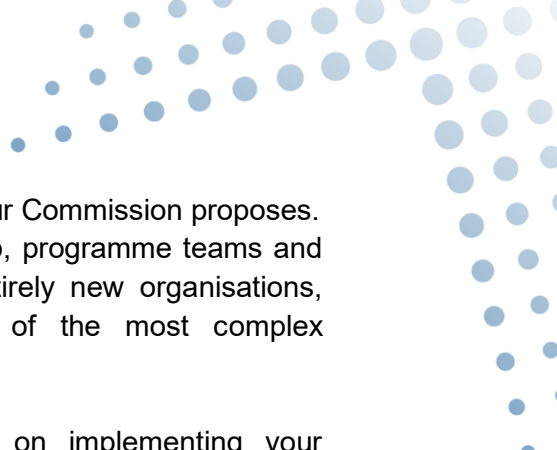
In doing so, Government is redesigning the organisations responsible for delivering adult social care before it has decided what adult social care itself should become.

That sequence is, in my view, fundamentally flawed.

If your Commission recommends a National Care Service as the Prime Minister has alluded to, new governance arrangements, greater integration with the NHS, different commissioning models or revised statutory responsibilities, LGR risks creating a new generation of councils based upon assumptions that may be obsolete before they even come into existence.

In effect, billions will be spent restructuring local government and social care authorities around today's system only to require those same organisations to reorganise themselves again in order to implement your recommendations.

More immediately, LGR will absorb exactly the leadership, financial resources and



organisational capacity that will be needed to deliver the reforms your Commission proposes. Across England, councils will be forced to devote senior leadership, programme teams and financial resources to abolishing existing authorities, creating entirely new organisations, restructuring services, replacing systems and delivering one of the most complex organisational changes ever attempted in local government.

Those are the very people who will instead need to focus on implementing your recommendations.

There is a further consequence of LGR which I believe deserves particular consideration. If the Commission concludes that adult social care should become more integrated, more consistent and better connected with the NHS, Local Government Reorganisation moves in precisely the opposite direction.

Across England, county-wide adult social care services will be broken apart and redistributed across dozens of new unitary authorities. Instead of creating a more coherent system, LGR will fragment it further by requiring each new authority to establish its own statutory leadership, governance arrangements, commissioning functions and organisational structures.

That fragmentation comes at a time when Government itself recognises that the existing system already struggles to recruit and retain experienced leaders. Every new authority will require its own Director of Adult Social Services, alongside the wider statutory and senior leadership arrangements needed to discharge its legal responsibilities. Yet there is already a limited national pool of suitably experienced individuals, and it is difficult to see how those posts can realistically be filled across so many new organisations without weakening leadership elsewhere.

The consequence is that leadership capacity will become more dispersed just when Government needs strong, stable and experienced leadership to implement your recommendations.

More fundamentally, LGR risks embedding further organisational fragmentation into a system that your Commission has been established to make more joined-up. It creates more boundaries, more organisations, more governance arrangements and more interfaces between services at precisely the moment Government is seeking greater integration around the needs of those who rely upon care.

That is why I believe LGR is not simply an unfortunate distraction from reform. It risks taking the structure of adult social care in exactly the opposite direction to that which your Commission may ultimately recommend.

Equally concerning is the scale of public expenditure involved. Government has accepted that adult social care requires fundamental reform. Yet, instead of directing billions of pounds towards delivering that reform, vast sums will instead be consumed by the costs of LGR.

Those resources will fund organisational change rather than care reform. They will pay for restructuring rather than improving services. Every pound spent abolishing and recreating

councils is a pound unavailable to implement the changes your Commission is seeking to deliver.

I therefore believe LGR is not simply a parallel programme of work. It is now the greatest strategic risk to the successful implementation of your Commission's recommendations.

The timing makes this especially urgent. Government intends elections to the new councils in May 2027, with vesting day on 1 April 2028. Structural Change Orders will therefore need to be made within the coming months. Once that happens, councils will have little practical choice but to divert their leadership, resources and attention into delivering LGR.

There is therefore only a short window in which Government can still change course. Many councils, including the current social care authorities, have commenced Judicial Review's against the Government and they are already significantly behind their timetable.

I would respectfully urge you to make clear to Ministers that LGR should not proceed until your Commission has concluded its work and Government has determined the future model for adult social care.

Only then can local government be organised around the system Government actually wishes to create, rather than one it has already accepted requires fundamental reform.

If Government proceeds with LGR first, it risks spending billions of pounds, consuming years of leadership capacity and making implementation of your recommendations significantly more difficult than it need be. There is now only a short window before decisions are taken that will set LGR on an irreversible course. Once Structural Change Orders are made, leadership, financial resources and organisational capacity across local government will inevitably be diverted towards implementing LGR rather than delivering the reforms your Commission is seeking to achieve.

I therefore urge you to raise this issue directly and urgently with Ministers. If your Commission is to have the greatest possible impact, LGR must not be allowed to undermine its recommendations before they have even been made. If Government is serious about creating a National Care Service, it must first ensure that the organisations responsible for delivering it are not being fundamentally reorganised around a system that your Commission has been established to replace.

Thank you once again for undertaking this vital work. I hope you will use the authority of your Commission to impress upon Government the urgency of stopping LGR now, before it compromises the successful delivery of the reforms you have been asked to design.

With every good wish,



Councillor Dan Swords

Executive Leader of Harlow Council