Revaluing Social Care

Social care is more than just a sector of the economy. It is central to life and underpins how people live and work across the country. It is closely connected to the health of individuals, communities and society as a whole – and the importance and need for social care work is growing. How we value social care work will shape how we respond to one of the greatest challenges facing the UK.

At a time of economic turbulence and sectoral shift, the social care sector has huge potential. There are over 1.5 million jobs in the social care sector in the United Kingdom, with the overwhelming majority in direct care roles. As the population ages and life expectancy grows, the care needs of the country are growing. What’s more, social care jobs are widely predicted to be some of the least threatened by technological change, due to the complex interpersonal skills they require. The combination of growing demand for social care, and relative insulation from technological disruption makes social care a growth industry with great potential.

Yet despite the potential strength of the sector, the majority of social care work remains invisible to the headline economic indicators. A recent report by Skills for Care estimated that the adult social care sector alone directly contributes £23.6 billion in Gross Value Add (GVA) for the UK economy. Whereas this is a significant contribution, an estimated 7 million people in the UK care for loved ones, generating an estimated £132 billion in economic value for each year. Like all forms of unpaid work, voluntary care work within households and communities does not show up in the UK’s Gross Domestic Product. This suggests we may be taking ‘hidden’ social care for granted.

The economic contribution of the social care sector is made largely by women. 82% of the current care workforce in the UK are female, and women are more likely than men to be unpaid carers within their communities. Non-British citizens, notably people from Poland and Romania, also contribute significantly to the social care sector in the UK, comprising approximately 17% of the workforce. The prevalence of European citizens working in social care in the UK suggests that the sector may face significant recruitment challenges following the UK’s exit from the European Union. Recruitment drives, such as the recent Mumsnet campaign for nurses, are welcome have not yet sought to redress this imbalance. Sectoral shifts and job displacement may offer new opportunities to diversify recruitment.

Pay and benefits for social care work are variable and compare relatively poorly, when set against national averages. The average full time equivalent pay for a Local Authority care worker in the UK is £18,900, in line with pay in the retail and restaurant sectors. By way of comparison, median annual income before tax for adults in the UK is £23,600. Within the private sector, where the vast majority of care workers are employed, average pay is even lower. There is also a danger that disruption in other parts of the economy could depress already low wages within sectors like social care.
More than half of social care workers in the UK work less than full-time, meaning that they face the double-hit of low pay and low overall hours. Benefits, sick pay and pensions are variable and insecure contracts are common place with 60% of the social care workforce employed on zero hours contracts in 2017. Turnover rates are very high at over 30% with many workers quitting before the end of their induction period. It is likely to be hard to fill growing vacancies - and manage transition from other sectors - without some essential building blocks in place.

**Investment in training and professional development for social care workers has not been a priority to date.** The Care Quality Commission’s recent report into the state of social care highlighted that the lack of investment in training and development was particularly stark when compared to equivalent spending for other NHS workers. The absence of time and pathways for progression may be linked to a perception of inadequate recognition and status being given to social care work in the UK.

**Media narratives frame care as a narrow issue, limited to care-recipients.** As a general rule, there is a lack of attention given to the wider role of social care to support healthy lives and communities. Discussion about the broader social costs and effects of care provision is largely absent. Studies by the Frameworks Institute for the Health Foundation show that stories about individuals are advanced instead, which miss the bigger picture and reinforce individualistic ways of thinking about social care and health.

There are, therefore, many senses in which social care can be said to be undervalued. In the most straightforward sense, many frontline workers in the social care sector face low-paid, insecure work with little opportunity for progression either within or outside of the industry. Poor conditions have contributed to low staff retention nationwide at a critical time when the UK needs to be employing social care workers at a faster rate than ever before. There remains a pervasive attitude that much of the UK’s social care burden ought to be shouldered by communities on an unpaid basis, with the weight falling disproportionately on women. As the Fourth Industrial Revolution advances, the time is opportune to ask how the UK can value social care work and skills more highly through the 21st Century.

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4 Carers UK, *Valuing Carers 2015*, 2015
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
The Workshop

The purpose of the “Revaluing Social Care” workshop is to articulate the problems at the heart of why social care is undervalued, and to come up with solutions - both big and small - for fixing it. IFOW has adapted a design-thinking methodology for social policy innovation and will as participants to focus on the human experience of social care work throughout the process.

The leader of the workshop, Professor Dale Russell HonFRCA is a leading expert in design methodology, having worked extensively in the social sector for projects such as “Design Against Crime”, and for corporate clients such as Unilever and Samsung. Participants in this workshop will come from a diverse range of professional and personal backgrounds including frontline social care and unpaid care work, policy, academia and government.

Topics for Discussion

We are keen for participants to bring their own experience and expertise to steer the workshop, and for each working group to arrive independently at a topic for discussion. The following themes are some suggestions as a starting point:

**Good Work in Social Care** – Under this theme, discussion could focus on what good work means in the context of social care. As a springboard for discussion, attached is the IFOW “Good Work Charter” which outlines the principles of good work.

**Gender & Identity** - Under this theme, discussion could focus on the ‘feminisation’ of care work, and the implications this has for the revaluation of social care and future policy.

**Recruitment, Training & Progression** - Under this theme, discussion could focus on how the sector can attract workers and meet the professional and personal aspirations of its workforce.

**Unifying Social Care** - Under this theme, discussion will focus on how to bring together the various contributors to social care in the UK, including the healthcare sector, the voluntary sector, and the private and public care sectors, to maximise impact and ensure that all workers are properly valued.
# Itinerary

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>9:30-10:00</td>
<td>Arrival</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00-10:05</td>
<td>Welcome and background information</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:05-10:30</td>
<td>Introduction to design thinking</td>
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<td>10:30-10:40</td>
<td>Warm Ups</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:40-11:00</td>
<td>Stage 1 - What could “Revaluing Social Care” mean?</td>
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<td>11:00 – 11:20</td>
<td>Stage 2 - Defining the problem</td>
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<td>11:30 – 11:50</td>
<td>Stage 3 - Brainstorming solutions</td>
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<td>11:50 – 12:10</td>
<td>Stage 4 - Evaluating the ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:10 – 13:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>13:00 – 13:20</td>
<td>Stage 5 - How do we implement?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13:20 – 13:40</td>
<td>Wrap up led by Professor Russell.</td>
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<td>13:40 – 14:00</td>
<td>Written feedback forms, networking and end.</td>
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Institute for the Future of Work

The Good Work Charter

1. Access
   Everyone should have access to good work

2. Fair pay
   Everyone should be fairly paid

3. Fair conditions
   Everyone should work on fair conditions set out on fair terms

4. Equality
   Everyone should be treated equally and without discrimination

5. Dignity
   Work should promote dignity

6. Autonomy
   Work should promote autonomy

7. Wellbeing
   Work should promote physical and mental wellbeing

8. Support
   Everyone should have access to institutions and people who can represent their interests

9. Participation
   Everyone should be able to take part in determining and improving working conditions

10. Learning
    Everyone should have access to lifelong learning and career guidance