**“Social care deserves same respect as NHS” – the sector and public demand parity of pay to address workforce challenges**

* **80%** of the public say social care is as important or deserves the same respect as the NHS
* **Only 6%** do not think social care workers should receive the same pay as NHS Band 3 workers
* Dimensions launches petition calling for alignment of minimum care worker pay to NHS Band 3, to futureproof the social care workforce

[Dimensions](https://dimensions-uk.org/), a not-for-profit supporting people with learning disabilities and autistic people, today launches a petition calling for government to align minimum care worker pay to NHS Band 3 – a plea backed overwhelmingly by the public.

The petition launches in the wake of £250 million being cut from funding promised to the social care workforce, at a time when urgent action is required to prioritise recruitment and retention. There are currently around 165,000 social care vacancies – an increase of 52% since 2020-21[[1]](#footnote-2).

After years of delayed reform, the public backs the social care sector in calling for the recognition it deserves. New research from Dimensions reveals **80%** of the public think social care is as important or deserves the same respect as the NHS. Furthermore, **only 6%** of the nation do not think social care workers should receive the same pay as NHS Band 3 workers – falling to **just 3%** of those over age 55.

NHS Band 3 includes clinical support workers, therapy assistants, pharmacy assistants, administrative workers, and clerical staff, who are currently paid £11.11 per hour. Dimensions – and the public – believe social care workers’ skills and professionalism should be recognised at an equal level with these important roles to reflect the complex caring tasks they undertake alongside supporting people to gain choice, control, and agency over their lives.

At present, **four in ten[[2]](#footnote-3)** social care workers earn less than the real living wage. Between 2013-2020, a sales assistant went from earning 13p per hour less than a care worker to 21p more on average[[3]](#footnote-4), but social care providers are restricted in increasing pay by tough limits on local authority budgets. Amidst the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, many skilled social care workers feel they have no choice but to leave the workforce for better paid roles elsewhere.

To reverse this issue, Dimensions’ petition calls on the public and social care sector to unite in a call for government to benchmark pay with the NHS Band 3. This will allow support workers to earn a wage aligned with their skills and responsibilities, and encourage a much-needed pool of talented, dedicated workers into these vital careers.

**Brett Hayter (29), Lead Support Worker at Dimensions**, says:

*“I’m gutted I didn’t find this career sooner. After the pandemic forced an end to my career in the leisure industry, I applied for a job as a support worker, not really knowing what it entailed, but I’m so glad I did. From day one, I have loved it. I’ve never had a job that I’ve loved so much.*

*The most rewarding part of the role is the relationships we form. I’ve made five amazing friends by working with the five people I support. It’s a lot of hard work and commitment, but to see them getting the best out of their lives because of the support we give them and seeing a smile on their faces is inspiring and the reason we all do this job. I would encourage any enthusiastic and compassionate individual to consider a career in social care!”*

With Dimensions’ research finding **a fifth (20%)** of the public are currently considering moving jobs, social care could be a good fit for many. However, salary was rated as the most important factor when considering a new job - unsurprising, given the cost of living crisis. Therefore, without adequate pay and sufficient respect and funding from government, it will be difficult to convert the increased intention into social care recruits.

**Jorden Carter, Lead Support Worker at Dimensions**, says:

*“My mum has worked in the social care sector for as long as I can remember and I grew up seeing how much she enjoyed her job, so in 2018 I joined her. What I love about the role is working to help those we support live as independently as possible, helping them to do and enjoy the activities we all love. Supporting them to have these experiences makes it worthwhile, it’s a really rewarding career.*

*But these responsibilities are often not recognised in wider society and our pay certainly doesn’t reflect how much we do – we go through a lot of training including CPR, lifesaving, and handling medications, yet you can go to the NHS, hospitality and retail and earn a lot more.”*

**Rachael Dodgson, Chief Executive of Dimensions,**recently spent a week working as a support worker with a team in London, supporting adults with learning disabilities with all aspects of daily living. She says:

*“The shortfall in funding for the social care workforce is a betrayal of the hardworking, skilled individuals who were on the frontline of the pandemic and continue to provide essential care and support for older and disabled people who draw on social care support. The NHS simply cannot function without social care – so social care deserves the same recognition that the NHS rightfully has.*

*“Increasing support worker pay is not the silver bullet to workforce challenges but it is a critical first step and will make a measurable difference. We’ve implemented three pay rises for our support workers in the last year, but we’re restricted in going further by tough limits on local authority budgets. Yes, a larger, better-paid social care workforce comes with costs, but it’s an investment in people – both in rewarding and retaining a dedicated workforce and in providing people with the support they require to live happy and healthy lives.”*

The petition is open for signatures, to sign, please visit: <https://www.change.org/social-care-pay>.

In May 2022, Dimensions published its [Workforce Manifesto](https://dimensions-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/Workforce-manifesto.pdf). Alongside calling for social care workforce pay to be benchmarked with NHS Band 3, it calls for the establishment of a Skills Framework, an integrated health and care system, and an annual workforce plan.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

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**About the research**

In April 2023, Censuswide surveyed 2,001 adults across the UK, on behalf of Dimensions.

**About Dimensions**

Dimensions provides evidence-based, outcomes-focused support for people with learning disabilities, autism and complex needs. We help people be actively involved in their communities.

We are one of the largest not-for-profit support providers in the UK. We currently support around 3,500 people and their families throughout England and Wales with help from our 7,000 members of staff.

We have been providing support packages for families for 40 years. We offer a range of support services to adults of all ages, including those with complex needs or challenging behaviour.

We are proud to be a not-for-profit organisation, not here for commercial gain. This means we’re able to invest all our efforts and resources into the important things – which is helping the people we support lead happy and fulfilled lives.

**Case studies**

**Jorden Carter** is a Lead Support Worker at Dimensions.

Jorden’s mum has worked in the social care sector since Jorden was three, so she grew up seeing the rewards and challenges of the job. In 2018 Jorden decided to follow in her mum’s footsteps, and work at the same location that her mum started in. She moved to a Dimensions location in April 2022.

As a Lead Support Worker, Jorden’s day-to-day responsibilities include medication distribution, personal care, mealtime assistance, and supporting people to go out and about in the community, along with a host of other things – no day is ever the same!

She loves working with those she supports to “help them live as independently possible, helping them to do and enjoy the activities we all love.” She says, “the people you support make it all worthwhile.”

Throughout her career in social care, she has experienced belittling labels such as ‘glorified bum wiper’ and feels that people often lack an understanding of the value of support workers. She says “we know the people we support, we are a big part of their lives, we understand their needs, both medical and emotional.”

With regards to pay, Jorden feels that there is limited recognition for how much training and work support workers do. It’s a rewarding job and one that she does because she loves it, but to read that you can earn more in the NHS, retail and hospitality is disheartening.

**Brett Hayter**, 29, is a Lead Support Worker at Dimensions in Yeovil.

 

After the pandemic forced an end to his long-time career in the leisure and fitness industry, Brett applied for the role of support worker, not really knowing what it entailed. He got the job and has not looked back since, saying “I’m gutted I didn’t find it sooner!” He’s never had a job that he’s loved so much.

Brett works in a supported living community, specifically supporting five men with profound learning disabilities, who are all non-verbal, with their day-to-day activities and personal care.

He has formed strong relationships with those he supports and seeing them grow from day-to-day and try new things has been extremely rewarding. No day is the same and the job requires a lot of hard work and commitment, but Brett loves that, saying “I have experienced things I never thought I would experience”. You never get bored when you are helping people to lead happy and fulfilling lives, and seeing them with a smile on their face is inspiring and is why he loves his job so much.

Brett would encourage other like-minded, compassionate individuals to consider a career in social care, but he acknowledges that the low pay offered can often put people off entering the sector, despite how rewarding the roles are. “We’re missing out on enthusiastic people because we can’t pay them enough.”

1. Skills for Care, 2022 <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Adult-Social-Care-Workforce-Data/Workforce-intelligence/publications/national-information/The-size-and-structure-of-the-adult-social-care-sector-and-workforce-in-England.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Skills for Care, 2022 <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Adult-Social-Care-Workforce-Data/Workforce-intelligence/documents/Pay-in-ASC-sector-2023.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Skills for Care, 2022 <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Adult-Social-Care-Workforce-Data/Workforce-intelligence/publications/national-information/The-state-of-the-adult-social-care-sector-and-workforce-in-England.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)