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Does the social care sector have a champion in Baroness Ros Altmann?

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I have long thought that Baroness Ros Altmann has eloquently put the challenges facing social care firmly at the doorstep of the government. She states the case as it is, with a no holds barred account of the crises in social care. As I see it, she is determined to get justice and recognition for all those who work in social care.

Take her most recent article in the Daily Mail in which she states, even before the pandemic, Britain's escalating care crisis was rarely far from the headlines.

But it has been all too easy for politicians of all parties to acknowledge the problem, promise the earth — and then move swiftly on.

Well, not anymore. In an open letter to [Boris Johnson](#), the head of Care England which represents 4,000 providers, makes an emotional plea for the Prime Minister to fix it once and for all.

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'We are fed up with procrastination: it is a crying shame that this pandemic has shown the nation just what an important sector we are' writes Professor Martin Green.

He demands Mr Johnson makes good his promise — uttered on the steps of Downing Street almost exactly one year ago when he took power — to end the social care crisis, promising 'a clear plan we have prepared to give every older person the dignity and security they deserve'.

Ravaged

And he lambasts him for trying to deflect blame for the tens of thousands of deaths in care homes as he did last week.

Ros Altmann says "When I first heard the PM attributing the Covid-19 carnage among Britain's elderly to care home staff, I assumed he must be joking. A bad taste joke, admittedly.

But it seems he was deadly serious. In his view, the shamefully high number was because 'too many care homes didn't really follow the procedures'.

I gave him the benefit of the doubt: perhaps he had been wrongly briefed and would soon retract his words? But when pressed, his spokesman refused to offer an apology.

Had neither seen the harrowing footage of Spanish and Italian care homes being ravaged by the virus which dominated the TV news until the middle of March, when our own impending lockdown began to take over the agenda?

It was slowly becoming clear that a rising proportion of our Covid-19 deaths were happening in the same way.

And yet the Government's guidance did not change: 'It remains very unlikely that people receiving care in a care home or the community will become infected,' we were told. That statement turned out to be false. And lethally so".

Governments failure to take responsibility

Baroness Altmann goes on to say "Today, I make no apology for venting my fury about this situation once again. I am deeply concerned at the staggering failure to take responsibility for the abandonment of our most vulnerable citizens.

Unless those at the top of Government understand the extent of the failures in our social care system, there will be no sense of urgency to address them.

Abandoned

Providers of social care and staff have a right to feel abandoned. They have been promised action on social care by the leaders of all political parties.

In March 2017, the then Chancellor Philip Hammond promised a Green Paper on the care system by the year's end. It never materialised.

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Hopes were again raised by Boris Johnson's promise. Almost a year later, that 'clear plan' is nowhere in sight. And Britain is left with a social care system unfit for purpose. By far the most depressing aspect of this is how the care sector and those it is responsible for are viewed as a second-class branch of our health system. 'Protect the NHS' was the first official slogan of the pandemic. There was no such exhortation to 'Protect the Elderly and Vulnerable', who were the most likely to die from Covid-19.

Summary

According to Baroness Altmann The NHS has been venerated during this pandemic, and rightly so. But what about those carers who are not trained to be nurses, yet did their best while working without the proper protective equipment? Few will disagree with her comments.

Yesterday's announcement on new immigration rules that effectively block care providers from recruiting the staff they need is further evidence of the failure of government to recognise the importance of social care to our most vulnerable.

Does social care have a champion in to Baroness Ros Altmann? Given the articles she has written in support of social care and standing up to the government for failure to take responsibility and renegeing on promises to reform, I think we have.

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