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## The treatment of our elderly is a disgrace to a civilised nation: As new visa rules deal hammer blow to the care sector, former pensions minister **BARONESS ROS ALTMANN** issues a passionate call to arms

By **BARONESS ALTMANN FOR THE DAILY MAIL**

**PUBLISHED:** 01:22, 14 July 2020 | **UPDATED:** 01:27, 14 July 2020

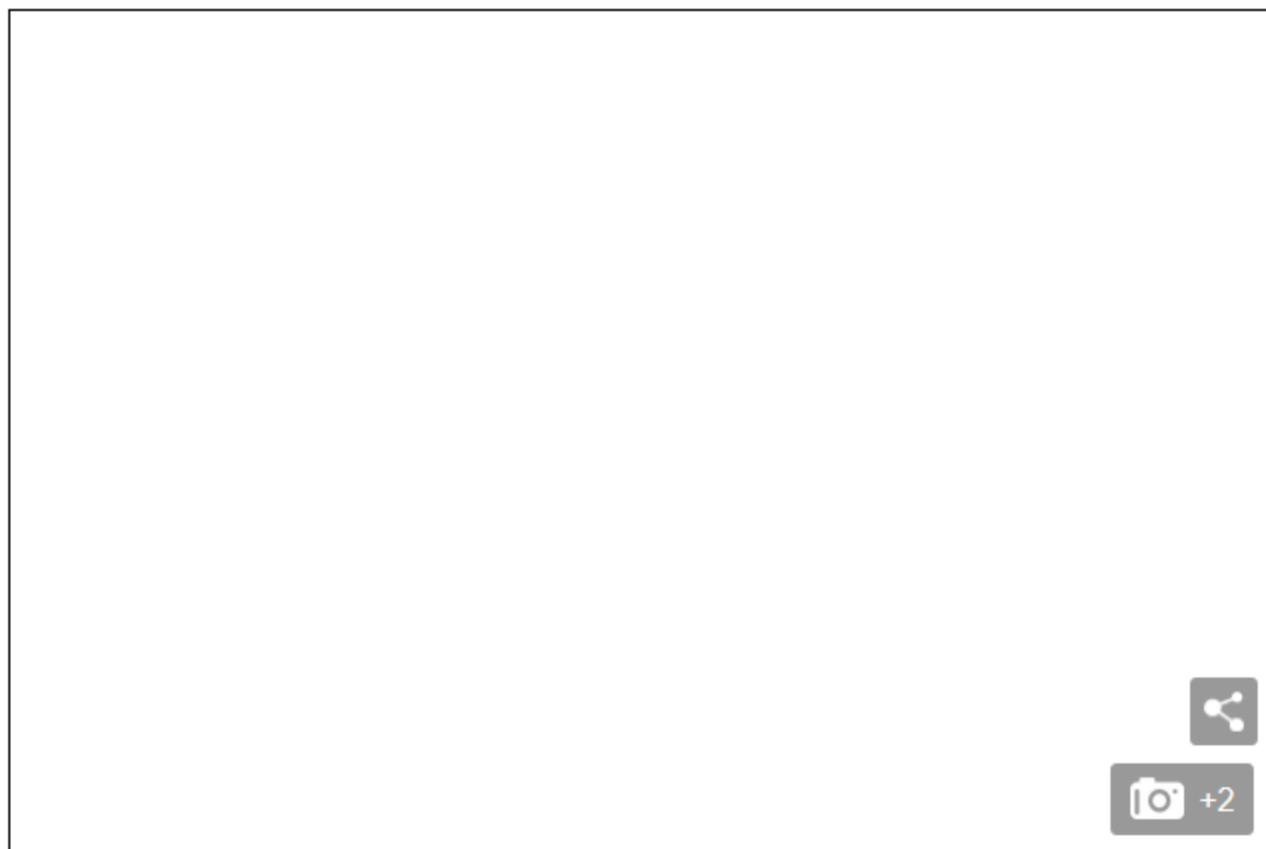


Even before the pandemic, Britain's escalating care crisis was rarely far from the headlines.

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 any more. 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.

'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.



Well, not any more. 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. pictured: Stock photo of a nurse helping an elderly woman

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.

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.

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<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-851...>

The Health Secretary Matt Hancock's attempt to clarify the PM's controversial remark was equally baffling.

'The PM was explaining that because asymptomatic transmission was not known about, the correct procedures were therefore not known,' he said.

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 didn't 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.

But this 'guidance' was far from the only, tragic error.

On March 19 hospitals were instructed to discharge all patients who were 'blocking beds' — which included those awaiting places in residential care or needing care in their homes — in advance of the expected tidal wave of Covid-19 cases.

Many were moved to care homes without being tested for the virus. Inevitably, it soon transpired a significant number had contracted the virus in hospital and spread it to care home staff and other residents.

It was proof, if we needed it, that Government policy was to protect our most cherished institution, the NHS, rather than individuals who ended up paying with their lives.

It was another four weeks before the Government decided that all patients discharged from hospital should be tested for Covid-19 first. But even this was not as it seemed, because the guidance also stated they could be discharged before the test results had come back.

Soon after it was revealed that there had been 100 new outbreaks in care homes across the country — I wrote on these pages that the elderly in care homes were 'being abandoned like lambs to the slaughter'.