



Department
of Health &
Social Care

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Gareth Jones of Assistant Coroner for the coroner area of West Sussex, Brighton and Hove

04/03/2024

Dear Gareth,

Thank you for your letter of 18th December 2023 about the death of Carl Anthony Owston. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for social care.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Mr Owston's death and I offer my sincere condolences to their family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are concerning and I am grateful to you for raising the matter of capacity in the care market and its impact on this case.

Under the Care Act (2014), local authorities have the duty to promote the efficient and effective operation of their care market and deliver a range of care and support services to meet diverse local needs. They must have regard to current and future demand for care and support services and consider how providers will meet that demand, including through fostering a workforce with the appropriate skills. I understand that Brighton and Hove Council have plans to address the lack of care provision in their market, including the necessary accommodation, and accompanying care & support services for those with mental health needs.

However, the government recognises that shaping a care market and ensuring local provision meets local needs is challenging, which is why we are supporting local authorities in a number of ways.

Firstly, the government has made available up to £8.6 billion in additional funding over this financial year and next to support adult social care and discharge. This includes the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund (MSIF) and the MSIF Workforce Fund, which are worth almost £2 billion over two years and are designed to support local authorities to increase adult social care capacity by targeting improvements in workforce recruitment and retention, reduce waiting times and increase fee rates paid to providers in their local areas. The MSIF Workforce Fund includes a particular focus on workforce pay.

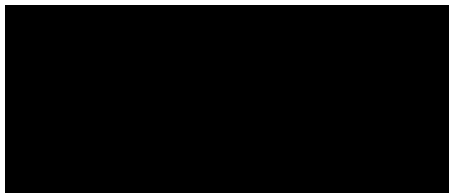
The government is also committed to supporting the construction of new specialist and supported housing. This includes through our Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund (CASSH), which provides capital subsidies to providers and, alongside this, the £11.5bn Affordable Homes programme (2021-26) (for England) which includes the delivery of new supported housing.

Furthermore, to ensure local authorities are always aware of local demand for specialist and supported housing (and the accompanying care & support services), the government has recently introduced a new duty on local authorities, through the Supported Housing Act 2023, to complete strategic plans for this part of the market. These plans will include forecasting the future supported housing need for all groups in the area, including for people with mental ill-health and those experiencing homelessness, and will set out a delivery plan on how they will meet this need. The government is consulting on this duty soon.

We are also committed to supporting local authorities with shaping their care markets and commissioning for all diverse local needs,. While local authorities are best placed to understand and plan for the needs of their populations, there are elements of good market shaping practice that can be universally applied, such as using population and market data to inform commissioning decisions and working effectively with providers to plan for meeting future demand. That is why, in *Next steps to put people at the heart of care* (2023), we committed to setting national standards for commissioners: to set clear expectations of what good commissioning looks like and to drive greater consistency across the country. We are also investing in a pilot training programme for senior local authority commissioners to help local areas with developing their strategic planning skills and to ensure they have the data they need to shape their markets well.

I hope this response is helpful and thank you again for raising these concerns.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Whately MP