

# Action Cerebral Palsy

## Political & Parliamentary Monitoring

### Week Commencing 17<sup>th</sup> December 2018

This week, the Government revealed its eagerly anticipated immigration white paper, setting out how the UK's border system will operate post-Brexit. The white paper, aspects of which will continue to be consulted on over the coming months, will prove influential as the National Health Service plans its services moving forward. The incoming Chief Executive of the King's Fund, Richard Murray, called on the Government to ["grasp the nettle of migration policy and allow in \[to the country\] many more health and social care staff from abroad."](#)

It is unclear whether the white paper lives up to Mr Murray's demands, with many concerned that a £30,000 minimum wage cap, which sets the threshold for what is defined as a 'skilled migrant', could prove detrimental to the social care sector. Those earning under the £30,000 cap may find it difficult to secure long-term visas. Although the Cabinet is still divided over what the exact cap should be, and further consultation is likely, the £30,000-figure has been touted as the preferred amount by the Home Office based on recommendations by the Migration Advisory Committee.

Given the average salary of a care worker is in the region of £20,000, and the starting salary of a nurse is in the region of £22,000, it is unsurprising that many in the health sector have raised their concerns over whether desperately needed staff from abroad will be able to gain access in to the UK. The Cavendish Council of health and care organisations said it was ["extremely concerned"](#) that visa proposals would prevent the health service and businesses accessing the number of care staff needed to sustain services.

For those health workers earning more than £30,000 (predominantly doctors, consultants and other specialists) the removal of the cap on number in the existing [tier 2 visa route](#) made the sponsorship system less bureaucratic for employers. This has since benefitted non-EU doctors attempting to gain entry in to the UK.

**This is the last monitoring document of 2018. Monitoring will resume on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2019. Whitehouse wishes ACP a Merry Christmas, and a prosperous and peaceful New Year.**

## Overview

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## £1.6 billion funding shortfall in special needs and disabilities funding

A crisis in support for children with special educational needs and disabilities could result in a £1.6 billion funding shortfall and a surge in parents resorting to legal action for help. Although the Government recently announced an emergency package of £350 million to ease the care crisis over the next two years, the Local Government Association, which represents local authorities, has said the extra cash falls well short of the £1.6 billion of investment they estimate services need by 2021.

Analysis by the LGA found that the current funding gap for students and young people with special educational needs could double next year to an estimated £806 million nationwide based on past trends. The news comes just weeks after Whitehouse reported that several councils were on the verge of collapse, with the prospect of services being cut dramatically, as the investment in special educational needs services stagnated but demand continued to rise.

New figures reveal there has been a 20 per cent increase in special educational needs tribunal appeals against councils in the last year, reflecting the growing number of parents challenging the decisions by local authorities not to offer specific services or streams of assistance for their children. At the same time, the number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans has increased by 35 per cent during the last year, with the numbers educated in special schools and colleges rising by 24 per cent during the same period.

The LGA is now calling on a national review of special needs provision, including measures to ensure schools, council and health and social care services all share the costs associated with it. In response to the news, Damian Hinds, the Education Secretary, said that whilst he recognised “that the high-needs budget faces significant pressures... every school or college should be one for a young person with special educational needs.”

***Given this news comes just weeks after local authorities raised similar concerns, ACP will be especially concerned that more parents and carers are being forced to take local authorities to court. Whitehouse will reach out to the LGA to seek to secure a meeting to highlight the charity’s work.***

## First ever drop in teaching assistants a “serious problem”

Professor Rob Webster, Associate Professor at the Centre for Inclusive Education at University College London, has described the first ever fall in the number of teaching assistants in England as a “serious problem” for schools. His research into the latest figures shows that, for the first time since the Department for Education began collating school workforce data in the mid-1990s, the annual count of teaching assistants has been lower than in the previous year.

Whilst Webster admitted that he didn’t think the situation was “critical”, he did argue that schools should not be complacent, with teaching assistants having their workloads stretched across a greater number of pupils. Webster added that not enough training and professional development in the workforce was leading to wider problems, including some assistants not being “kept in the loop” by teachers over lessons plans, structures, expected outcomes, and the development of specific students.

Webster, who oversees the MITA (Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants) project, has said that increasing the workforce size is only one solution. The Government and schools should also be looking at how teaching assistants are utilised, to ensure they are supporting the students who need them most.

***This news will be of interest to ACP given its recommendation for better training for prospective teachers and educational professionals (including teaching assistants) as part of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Report. A representative from UCL has been invited to the report launch.***

## NHS will still be short of nurses in five years

Ian Dalton, Chief Executive of NHS Improvement, has said it will be more than five years before the number of nurses the NHS needs are available. Speaking ahead of an anticipated long term plan on workforce strategy, Mr Dalton said that the shortfall in nurses was proving hard to solve and that he expected reaching breakeven would take at least five years.

Recent figures from NHS Improvement show that the number of vacant posts in the health service has risen by almost 10 per cent in the first quarter of the year, with more than 42,000 nursing posts being advertised across England and Wales. Mr Dalton, along with Simon Stevens, the Chief

Executive of NHS England, have previously indicated that increases in staffing will be closely linked with additional resources provided to the NHS. Dame Donna Kinnair, the Acting Chief Executive of the Royal College of Nursing, said that “swift action” was required to avoid a recruitment crisis.

NHS Improvement has said that it will be working with those Trusts with the lowest retention rates to improve the training and opportunities available to staff. At the same time, NHS England said that it hoped that the recent recruitment campaign for the NHS would continue to be funded as part of the NHS’s long term plan.

***The news regarding the number of nursing vacancies will be of concern to ACP. Delays in treatment can negatively affect the standard of living for those with cerebral palsy, and can often create the ‘stop-go’ style of care which damages trusts in clinicians. Whitehouse will continue to monitor recruitment and retention figures.***