

# The Case for a Professional Care Worker Register in England

Report  
2023

# Contents

Introduction	3-4
The Proposal	5-8
Consultation Findings	9-17
Overview of sector feedback	10
Should there be a register?	11-14
Should there be a cost?	15
What should the register include?	16
Does language matter	17
Summary	18-19
Appendices	20-21
References	

# Introduction

The proposition for a care register for care professionals in England has been a matter of discussion for several years. Similar to the registration system in place for nurses<sup>i</sup>, there has been an increasing call for the establishment of a register that ensures the accountability and professionalism of care workers (care professionals). Recognising the significance of this issue, a focus group consisting of organisations such as the National Association of Care and Support Workers (NACAS), the Institute of Healthcare Management (IHSCM), and other stakeholders has been formed to explore the creation of such a register.

As part of this ongoing effort, a consultation process was undertaken to gather insights and perspectives from various stakeholders within the social care sector. The objective of this consultation was to understand the

expectations and preferences of individuals involved living with or working in social care, thereby ensuring their input in shaping the design and implementation of the care register.

To ensure a holistic understanding of the needs and concerns of the social care community, an extensive survey was devised. The survey methodology employed logical branching, whereby respondents were directed to specific sections based on their relationship to care. This approach facilitated tailored questioning, enabling respondents to provide insights based on their unique position or association with social care. The survey was divided into four sections, each containing identical questions that were slightly rephrased to reflect the respondents' roles or connections within the social care landscape.

This report presents an analysis of the survey responses received. Through an exploration of the responses collected during this consultation, our aim is to lay the foundation for a robust and effective care register that addresses the needs of care professionals, service users, and other stakeholders. This report serves as an initial step in the ongoing dialogue surrounding the establishment of a care register, highlighting the key insights derived from the survey and informing subsequent stages of this critical endeavour.

The consultation was split into 7 key questions.

1. If a register were available should people working in care be encouraged to join it?
2. How should members of the register be referred to? e.g care worker, care professional, professional care worker etc.
3. Should registration be a condition of employment?
4. Should there be a registration fee for carer workers to be part of the register?
5. We would encourage registered individuals to maintain their profiles. What information would you like to see on the register about your carers?

6. If you have a question about the proposed register and it's process, please add it here. We will then start to collate an FAQ section which will be posted on registry website.
7. There regrettably will be instances where registrants may require investigation into their professional conduct. Would you consider becoming a member of an impartial investigation panel investigation poor practice?

These questions will form the sections of this report where the data will be displayed and reviewed.

Background

Methodology

# The Proposal

This report lays out the data to support this proposal for the creation of a professional care register for England. This proposal is an initial suggestion of what the register could look like and how it could benefit the workforce and those who employ or receive social care support.

This register will provide numerous benefits to both employers and care professionals, enhancing safe recruitment, reducing training demands, expediting the recruitment process, and ultimately elevating the professional status of the caring role.

## Safe Recruitment:

The Professional Care Register will significantly contribute to safer and faster recruitment processes. Care professionals willing to join the register will have their references and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

checks already registered. This would alleviate the burden on employers to individually verify and chase up references and DBS checks for each candidate, saving valuable time and resources.

By streamlining the recruitment process, employers can focus on assessing candidates' suitability for the specific role rather than duplicating administrative tasks.

## Training Passport:

The Professional Care Register will introduce a comprehensive training passport system. Care professionals who voluntarily register will be required to maintain an up-to-date training record, including certifications and qualifications. This will minimize the need for individuals to repeatedly complete mandatory training whenever they change roles or employers.

Instead, employers can easily access the training passport to verify the care professional's competency, reducing training costs and time spent on redundant training sessions.

#### Expedited Recruitment Process:

Employers will benefit from an accelerated recruitment process due to the existing references and DBS checks registered in the Professional Care Register. With the necessary background checks already in place, employers can proceed with the hiring process more swiftly and confidently. This will result in quicker placements, reducing the time vacancies remain open and ensuring continuity of care for vulnerable individuals.

#### Professionalisation of the Caring Role:

The Professional Care Register will contribute to the professionalization of the caring role in England. By promoting voluntary registration, the initiative will demonstrate the commitment of care professionals to their field and their dedication to maintaining high standards of care provision. A voluntary register will

highlight the importance of ongoing professional development, thereby elevating the reputation of the caregiving profession as a whole. This recognition will help attract and retain skilled individuals, fostering a more capable and motivated workforce.

#### Reassurance for People who Employ Care Services:

People who require social care support to live independent lives may choose to source their support independently through the use of Direct payments, a personal budget, or their own funds. Whilst this can be an incredibly efficient and personalised approach to care and support, it can also leave people vulnerable to abuse if the correct checks are not conducted. Having a register where people can advertise for and search for care professionals to provide them their care and support could remove most of the risks around sourcing care independently.

# Implementation

To implement the Professional Care Register effectively, we propose the following key steps:

**Collaboration with Relevant Stakeholders:** Engage with care providers, professional organisations, regulatory bodies, and government agencies to establish a collective framework for the Professional Care Register. This collaborative approach will ensure the register's credibility and industry-wide acceptance.

**Development of a User-Friendly Online Platform:** Create a secure and user-friendly online platform where care professionals can register, update their training passport, and maintain their records. The platform should also enable employers to verify registered professionals' credentials efficiently.

**Promotion and Awareness Campaigns:** Launch an extensive promotion and awareness campaign targeting care professionals and employers. This will emphasize the benefits of voluntary registration, raising awareness about the register's existence and encouraging participation from all relevant parties.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation system to continuously assess the effectiveness of the Professional Care Register. Regular feedback from registered professionals, employers, and other stakeholders will help identify areas for improvement and ensure ongoing optimization of the register's functionality.

**Funding the Register:** Funding of the register has been given much deliberation with the question of “should there be a fee?” fuelling the majority of the discussion. Feedback from the consultation is that there should be a fee to the people registering as the social care workforce already face mounting financial pressures. That said, the majority for wanting no fee for the register was slim. Further on in the report we examine the responses about funding the

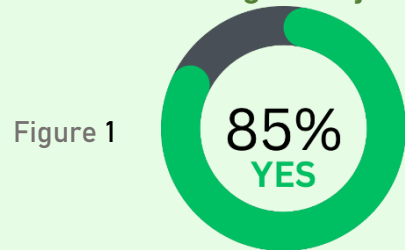
register and what suggestions had been put forward. This proposal, although taking the consultation into account, recommends that the register initially be free to access for all care professionals and instead funded through donations, partnerships, sponsorships, advertisement, and investment.



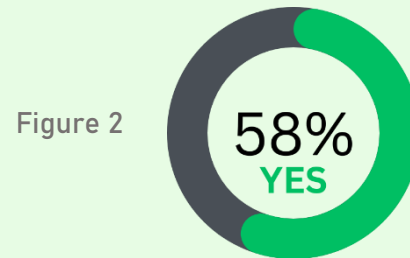
# CONSULTATION FINDINGS

# Overview of Sector Feedback

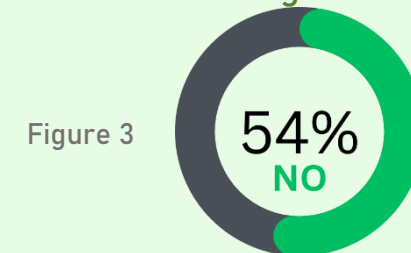
If a register were available, should people working in care be encouraged to join it?



Should registration be a condition of employment?



Should there be a registration fee for carer workers to be part of the register?



How should members of the register be referred to?

Figure 4



# Should there be a register?

Although there has been discussion for many years about a register for social care in England, before we put together a proposal to create one, we wanted to understand the appetite for a register from those working in care, those who use care, commissioners, and all other stakeholders. If there was no desire for there to be a register, then the challenge of proposing one and creating one would be great.

We started by asking the question, “If a register were available should people working in care be encouraged to join it? “

Fortunately, as seen in the overview of the findings, Figure 1 highlights that an overwhelming 85% of people consulted said they thought people working in care should be

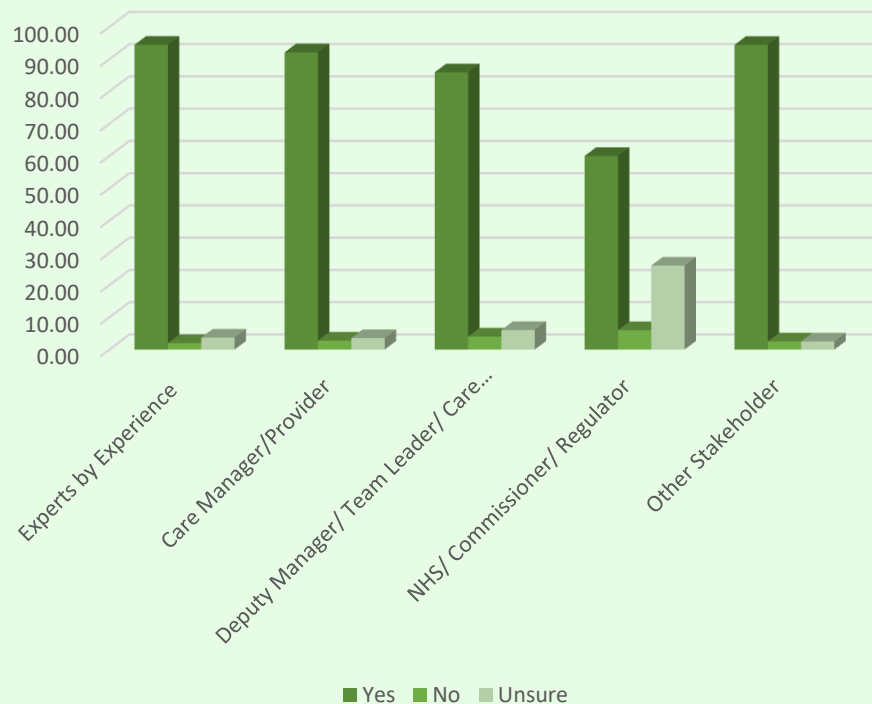
encouraged to join a register. When we break down this data further and view it in the split of respondent categories, Figure 5, we can see where the support is highest.

Unsurprisingly there is almost unanimous support from people who use care and the relatives and friends of those who use care. This is encouraging as one purpose of the register is to promote a stronger sense of safety for people who use care.

What is more surprising, however, is the high level of support and investment into encouraging care professionals to join a register from both the care professionals themselves, as well as managers and providers of social care services. A concern raised was

that introducing such a register may dissuade people from either joining the social care workforce or remaining in it. These preliminary findings seem to indicate that care professionals would actually be highly receptive of a voluntary care register.

Figure 5 If a register were available should people working in care be encouraged to join it?



Most surprising from these responses is the lower overall

support (although still over 60%) from NHS, commissioners, regulators. Whilst we didn't capture the individual roles of the people responding, it was expected that this category, which usually have a strong focus on compliance, would be more receptive to a nationwide approach to monitor and maintain the regulation of the workforce.

The other 15% responses were either no or unsure with some people providing other responses. The majority of these responses leaned towards unsure with an overall 3% saying no, they wouldn't encourage people working in care to join a care register.

Of the people who responded with other answers responses included:

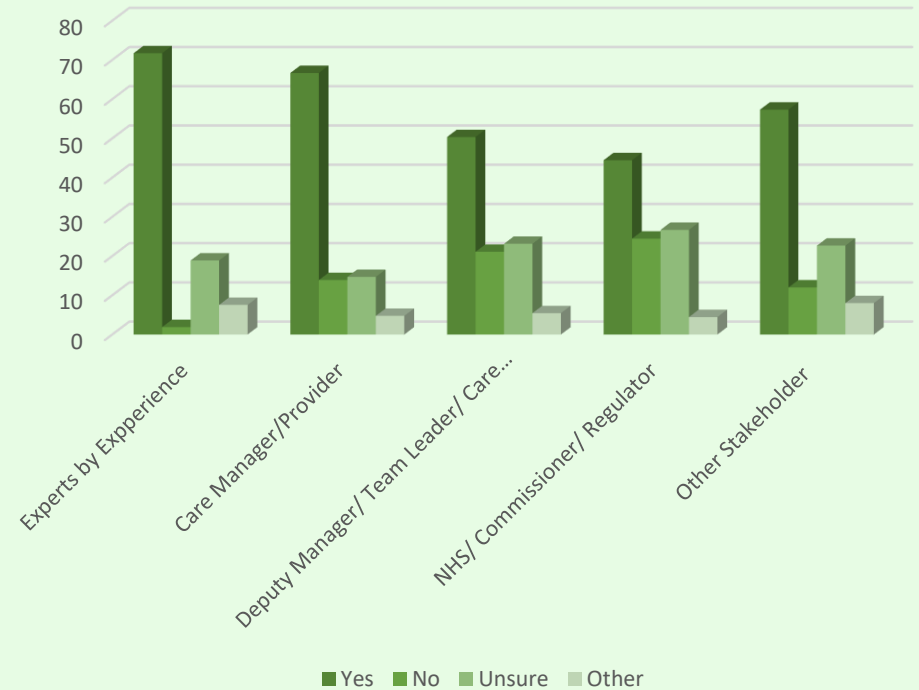
- *“Mandatory or pointless”*
- *Should be mandated.*
- *There is no register for HCA in the NHS, this requires to be an equal process across health and social care, having a register in one sector further embeds inequality where we are meant to be working towards integration*
- *Depends if it was seeking to control as often these things end up hindering rather than helping*

Whilst the majority of opinions are overwhelmingly supportive, there is still some trepidation about the intentions of a proposed register and indeed the efficacy of it if it were to be introduced as a voluntary condition.

When asked “Should registration be a condition of employment?”, there was still a majority in support of the notion, however it was significantly less than those supporting a voluntary approach (Figure 6). Despite the comments made on the previous question, it appears that the consensus is that the register remain voluntary during the initial implementation. Those less in support of a mandated register were care professionals and deputies with just over 50% in support. The only group that didn’t have a majority in support of a mandated register with 44% saying yes was NHS/ Commissioners/ Regulators. The group with the largest majority was experts by experience with just under 80% in favour of a mandated register.

Figure 6

Should registration be a condition of employment?



Of those who answered ‘other’ the responses given included:

- *Once in position and upon completion of the care certificate – prior to could put people off joining social care*

- *Maybe for those with relevant experience*
- *Once completed level 2 qualification*
- *No, but it could be a preferred asset*
- *Yes, but at level 3 or above*
- *After one year working in care*

e.g care worker, care professional, professional care worker etc.

# Should there be a cost?

We are conscious that the majority of people working in care are facing financial pressures due to low wages and uncertain working hours or zero hour contracts, so part of the consultation wanted to understand if there should be a fee for people working in social care to join the register.

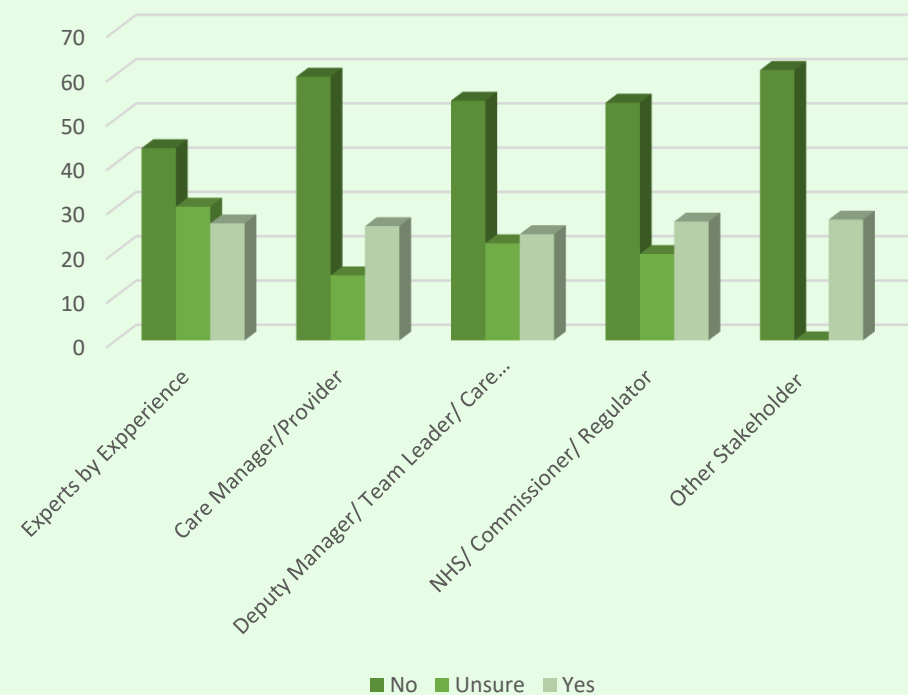
None of the groups had a majority in favour of their being a cost implication for a care register (Figure 7) with care managers and other stakeholders being most opposed. Surprisingly, there was a similar percentage of each group in favour of their being a cost at around 25%.

For those who were in favour, we asked what sort of fee should be applied and the responses were varied. Suggestions included:

- Enough to cover admin costs
- Many suggested between £10 and £50 per year
- Some suggested £5 a month
- Only few suggested a figure of above £100

Figure 7

Should registration be a condition of employment?



# What Should the Register Include?

The proposed benefits of a register for social care are to improve the professional status of those working in care, provide more reassurance to those in receipt of care, and to make it easier and quicker to recruit new talent into social care. To that end, we asked “What information would you like to see on the register about your carers?”

Below are some of the suggestions we received:

- *DBS*
- *CV*
- *Work Experience*
- *Qualifications*
- *Training*

- *CPD (something inline with NCM revalidation)*
- *Right to work in the UK*
- *For self employed, what they offer and their charges*
- *Personality profiles*

Whilst there are many GDPR and data concerns regarding the sharing of information, there is a clear desire for the register to hold enough information for it to be beneficial.

It's proposed that a checkmark system be included in the register to show that relevant information has been received and verified without disclosing identifiable information. There may need to be levels of disclosure built in to the register to allow prospective employers to access references and DBS upon offer of employment



# Does Language Matter?

It's no secret that social care lacks the professional impression of other sectors and some think this may come from how we refer to those working in social care. The most recognised term used is "care assistant" or "care worker" however as part of this consultation, we asked "How should members of the register be referred to? e.g care worker, care professional, professional care worker etc."

Overwhelmingly, the majority of responses suggested that professional be included somewhere within the job titles of people working in care. This question was a freeform response allowing people to be specific with what they thought and thus allowed us to create a word cloud with the most commonly used terms (Figure 8)



We can see from the word cloud that the words "care" and "professional" were the most frequently suggested and

thus the proposed register will include these terms throughout in a bid to cement a more professional image for those working in care, care professionals.

# Summary

It's clear from this consultation and report that there is a strong desire for there to be a register of some capacity for people working in social care in England.

The register we propose will be a voluntary register available to all people working in social care including but not limited to:

- Managers
- Care professionals
- Self employed care professionals
- Health care workers

During the initial implementation of the register, it will be free to register with funding sourced from investors and sponsors to cover administrative and staffing costs.

Whether the register remains free to access can not be decided yet but based off the feedback received it is currently what is recommended.

The register will collect various data from people including:

- DBS certificate number (not made public)
- C.V.
- Relevant experience
- Training and Qualifications
- Right to work in the UK
- Other information.

The register will be built to be GDPR compliant, registered with the ICO and will go through further consultation

through working groups to decide on how the data capture and consent to release and share data should be approached

The Register will refer to those working in social care as “care professionals” in all instances and it is suggested that a glossary of definitions be included to reassure people that they are choosing the correct profession when registering.

How the register will be incorporated (CIC, Charity, Limited Company) is yet to be decided, however a board will be introduced comprised of diverse members in ability, ethnicity and experience

Finally, the register will aim to launch in 2023 for a pilot phase and will include an extensive list of FAQs that have been received during the consultation phase. Some of these FAQs can be seen in appendix 1.

# Appendix 1 FAQs

1. How would the register help with the current care crisis?
2. How would you market it, do you think you could get some big care home or home care groups on board to offer small pay rises as part of registration?
3. What will the benefits be?
4. How will the system be regulated and administered?
5. What would be the registration requirements?
6. Who will be the regulator? How will it be funded?
7. Will it be mandatory or a choice?
8. Who will have access to the site?
9. What powers will it have?
10. Who has oversight, or who will the panel answer to?
11. Will it endorse or offer services such as legal representation, insurance, training etc?
12. Is there any way you might consider signing up or working collaboratively with the Care Connector Network to help improve standardisation and other issues?
13. Who would be responsible for maintaining / updating the register - how would information on the register be verified - who would have access to the information held
14. Who would monitor and ensure all carers are registered.
15. Why, when it's already hard enough to recruit carers, would it be desirable to add another hurdle to the employment process?
16. Will registration be mandatory if not it is less effective

17. Will there be a core set of standards for care staff, similar to social workers?

18. Would it include values as well as skills, knowledge and behaviours?

19. Would workers need to complete a certain amount of training before they could register?

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.nmc.org.uk/>