



# BRITISH GERIATRICS SOCIETY

For better health in old age

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Patron: H.R.H. The Prince of Wales

Dr Sarah Wollaston, MP  
Chair, Health Committee  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

28 September 2016

Dear Dr Wollaston

## **Celebrating United Nations Day of Older Persons, 1 October 2016**

We are delighted that the United Nations are recognising the incredibly important contributions that older people make to our world, while raising awareness of the issues of ageing, by designating 1 October as the International Day of Older Persons.

The British Geriatrics Society (BGS) would like to use this day to celebrate the success of the NHS and its founding vision, and the work of all who are involved in providing care for older people, which means that older people are living longer than ever before.

BGS is the professional body of specialists in the healthcare of older people in the United Kingdom. Our membership is drawn from doctors practising geriatric medicine including consultants, doctors in training and general practitioners, nurses, allied health professionals, researchers and scientists with a particular interest in the care of older people and the promotion of better health in old age. BGS has 3,500 members who work across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our mission is to improve the health care of older people.

At the same time as celebrating, we are acutely aware of the need to address the new challenges that success brings, and which our members are addressing on a daily basis in their work with people living with frailty, dementia, complex needs and multiple long-term conditions. We therefore bring to your attention the steps we believe Government must take if we are to continue to meet the health needs of older people in England.

- 1. An end to the divide between health and social care.** BGS supports the recommendation by the King's Fund's independent commission chaired by Economist Kate Barker, that those whose needs are defined as 'critical' should receive free social care, and the divide between health and social care should end for those at the highest levels of need.
- 2. Building greater capacity in intermediate care.** BGS calls on Government to increase its investment in building the capacity of those services which provide a link between home and acute hospital for older people who need rehabilitation, re-ablement, or sub-acute treatment. We are aware that Government itself has highlighted this need, most recently through the recommendations by the CQC in its report

published in July 2016, *Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers*. We believe the development of and investment in intermediate care services is fundamental to reducing the number of delayed transfers from hospital to home.

3. **Investment in healthcare and social support for older people** through sufficient funding to the NHS for achieving the goals of the Five Year Forward view, and to local authorities to enable them to meet their social care obligations, including those to older people. We are especially mindful of the recent King's Fund report (July 2016) on the current state of social care funding and provision.
4. **National strategic direction on older people living with frailty, dementia, complex needs and multiple long-term conditions.** We call for access to comprehensive geriatric assessment, personalised care plans for treatment and long-term follow-up for all older people with frailty, dementia, complex and multiple long-term conditions. These can only be provided consistently and effectively through ensuring that staffing is at a level which is adequate for delivery of that care and follow-up.
5. **Support staff across all care sectors to develop competencies in the management of older patients.** Requiring the regulatory and advisory bodies to incorporate competencies in the management of older people into their curricula, guidance, professional and quality standards is a key component in improving quality of healthcare for older people which requires further development.
6. **Measurement of care to focus on what matters most to older people and their families.** We call for a national set of indicators and outcomes to strengthen the measurement of older people's experience of care pathways, access to care and care outcomes and to ensure that what matters most to older people and their families is fully measured and improvements can be tracked over time.

We are aware of the full programme of work that the Health Committee is engaged in. If there is anything that we can do to support that, please do not hesitate to contact us.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely



Professor David Oliver  
President, British Geriatric Society



Dr Eileen Burns  
President-Elect, British Geriatrics Society