Keynote address

Chair: Victoria Macdonald, Health and Social Care Correspondent, Channel 4 News

Speaker: Caroline Dinenage, Minister of State for Care, Department of Health and Social Care

Overview of the session

There is an urgent need to deal with the challenges of our ageing population. The UK's Health and Social Care department has an increased budget of £9.4billion but acknowledges that this is not enough to tackle the key issues. The session highlighted the top aims and priorities for the current government in relation to health and social care for older people.

Key points made

1. A Green Paper outlining plans for a reform of the UK's health and social care system is due to be published in autumn. The aim is to create a sustainable system that people will have confidence in.
2. A key focus of the Health and Social Care department under the leadership of Matt Hancock will be prevention – working to empower people to be able to stay healthy for as long as possible in their own homes. Another top priority is attracting, supporting and sustaining a high quality health and social care workforce.
3. Ageing Society has been named as one of four "Grand Challenges" being tackled through the government's industrial strategy. They aim to take a mission-led approach, harnessing the power of innovation to help meet the needs of an ageing society.

Questions posed

Q: My father currently has a number of different carers and health professionals who see him on a regular basis. Only two of them are British – what will happen after Brexit?

A: One of the biggest challenges we currently face is attracting and retaining high quality health and social care workers. A key concern is ensuring we are still able to bring in people from overseas to fill these roles, and there is a workforce strategy in place which seeks to place higher value on the care profession and provide better support for employees.

Q: Social care is defined as supporting wellbeing but is currently more like basic life support. Will there be an increased focus on wellbeing in the new strategy?

A: Yes, absolutely. I believe that the Care Act has made a move forward in this area but we acknowledge that there is still not enough funding to get us to where we want to be. Ensuring quality of care service really is a number one priority.