



# FIVE NATIONS SOCIAL CARE LEADERS COMMUNIQUÉ

## *Social Care in an Age of Geopolitical Instability: A Call for Partnership in Resilience Planning*

Issued by the Five Nations Social Care Leaders | April 2026

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### **The People at the Heart of This**

Social care exists to uphold the dignity, safety and independence of people who rely on daily support, including older people and disabled people, across our societies. That care is delivered by dedicated workers and providers across the United Kingdom and Ireland, who are already managing the practical consequences of geopolitical instability.

When the system that supports these individuals comes under stress — economic, logistical, or human — it is they and their families who bear the greatest burden. Their safety, continuity of support and wellbeing should be central to government resilience and emergency planning.

### **The Pressure on Providers and the Workforce**

#### **Rising Energy and Fuel Costs**

Geopolitical instability has contributed to sustained volatility in global energy markets and supply-chain logistics, with direct consequences for social care providers across our five nations. Care delivery is energy-intensive: it depends on transport, heating, and the operational infrastructure of residential settings and community services. As fuel and energy costs rise - unlike many sectors - publicly funded and commissioned care providers cannot adjust their income to reflect rising costs in real time. This lag between cost shock and funding response is itself a risk to sector stability and the continuity of care.

Beyond energy, the current conflict in the Middle East is placing pressure on pharmaceutical and clinical supply chains globally. Cold-chain products, generic medicines, and petrochemical-derived active ingredients are all exposed to input material shortages and supply-chain delay.

For the workforce, these pressures are immediate and personal. Care workers are among the lowest-paid essential workers in our economies and are acutely exposed to the cost-of-living consequences of this instability in their daily lives. Higher travel costs affect those moving between care visits, while higher household bills add to financial pressure on the very people on whom care depends.

#### **Impact on International Staff and Diaspora Communities**

Social care across the UK and Ireland is sustained, in significant part, by workers from international and diaspora communities. Among these are individuals with personal and family ties to the Middle East, including those directly affected by the conflict in Iran. These workers are carrying not only the professional burden of an under-resourced sector, but also profound personal anxiety about the safety of loved ones in a region of active conflict.



**This human dimension deserves recognition. Effective resilience planning should include the wellbeing of the workforce, including emotional support and practical recognition of the pressures faced by staff with direct ties to affected regions.**

## **Our Call to Government**

We, the social care leaders of the Five Nations, call on our respective governments -and the forums through which they engage, including the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (BIIGC), and the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly to act with urgency on the following:

**Governments should engage meaningfully with the social care sector in resilience planning and social care leaders must be represented in emergency planning structures.**

Social care must be formally recognised as an essential public infrastructure within each nation's emergency planning and business continuity arrangements, with standing representation on the relevant national resilience and supply chain contingency bodies. Governments should work with social care providers and workforce representatives to assess and address the specific vulnerabilities that geopolitical instability — and the Iran conflict in particular — is creating for care delivery.

**Resilience planning should cover the full operational realities of care delivery.** This includes workforce travel, fuel access, medicines, food, utilities, communications, cyber security, PPE, community equipment and supply chains across both residential and home-based care. This holistic approach to resilience planning was exhibited during the Covid-19 pandemic, during which time social care was recognised as integral to health system resilience. This cross-system coordination must be rebuilt and maintained.

**The workforce must be supported in practical and human terms.** Recognition of the dual pressures — economic and personal — facing care workers in this period is essential. Support measures should address both the cost-of-living consequences of energy price volatility and the wellbeing of those with direct ties to affected regions.

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*Social care is not peripheral in times of crisis; it is an essential frontline service. The people who rely on it, and those who provide it, need governments to plan in partnership with the sector now. We stand ready to contribute our expertise and experience to that work.*

Issued collectively by the social care leaders of England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Ireland

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