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Position Statement

BIHS welcomes plans for a national care service and calls for accelerated action

The British & Irish Hypertension Society (BIHS) welcomes the Government's announcement of an independent commission on building a National Care Service. We applaud any steps taken toward better integration of health and social care, and we recognise the potential for significant improvement in patient outcomes as a result, particularly in the management of hypertension.

Why hypertension matters

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is the most common, modifiable risk factor for poor health outcomes, death and disability in the UK; effective early intervention in social care settings could significantly improve population health. As hypertension remains one of the leading causes of heart, brain and kidney disease, and is a key driver of hospital admissions, early detection and effective management of blood pressure can reduce the risk of strokes, heart attacks, and other complications, thereby alleviating pressure on the NHS and social care. Hypertension affects 1 in 3 adults, half of whom are undiagnosed or their blood pressure is not controlledⁱ. This means that more than 4.3 million people in England with high blood pressure go undiagnosed. Even for those who are diagnosed, only half are optimally treated. This places a considerable burden on the NHS, costing an estimated £2 billion every yearⁱⁱ. Acting to lower blood pressure can reduce the risk it poses to health. A 10mmHg reduction in blood pressure results in a reduced risk of coronary heart disease (17%), stroke (27%), heart failure (28%) and all-cause mortality (13%)ⁱⁱⁱ

We support

1. Improved training and support for care workers

- Equipping frontline care workers with the skills and knowledge needed to perform routine blood pressure measurement and monitoring can lead to earlier intervention and more effective management of hypertension.

2. Validation and regulation of assistive technology

- The BIHS strongly advocates for the use of validated blood pressure measurement devices and technologies that meet the highest clinical standards. Emerging technologies have the potential to improve the diagnosis and management of hypertension in social care settings but need to be assessed and deployed with an awareness of their limitations as well as advantages in ease of measurement.

3. Closer integration of care pathways

- Sharing of medical records and collaborative working between NHS and social care teams is essential for continuity of care, particularly for people living with long-term conditions such as hypertension.

Calls to accelerate reform

While we welcome the objectives of the new commission, we urge the Government and all stakeholders to expedite timelines of the review to allow for faster implementation. Every year of delay perpetuates hardship for individuals living with long-term conditions and adds financial strain on the NHS and local authorities.

The BIHS stands ready to contribute its expertise to ensure that blood pressure monitoring and management are at the heart of these reforms. By working collaboratively, we can drive meaningful change and improve the health and wellbeing of our population.

For more information or to discuss potential collaborations, please contact us at bihs@in-conference.org.uk

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For further information, please contact:

Website: <https://bihs.org.uk/>

ⁱ <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/health-survey-for-england/2022-part-2/adult-health>

ⁱⁱ <https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2021/09/06/blood-pressure-are-your-pipes-in-good-working-order/> accessed 7Jan2025

ⁱⁱⁱ [https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(15\)01225-8.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(15)01225-8.pdf) Ettehad, 2016 accessed 7Jan2025