

Advancing business innovation and skills development in the home care sector

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Overview of Fellowship:

This Innovation Fellowship (IF) focuses on the UK's growing but highly fragmented home care (HC) market. It addresses issues relevant to the industry conditions and skills development needed for businesses and people to advance quality-orientated innovation in the HC sector. The aim is to strengthen and enhance these businesses' offer of sustainable and high quality services, by addressing skill gaps and encouraging growth across the UK care economy. This project is linked to the ESRC-funded *Sustainable Care: connecting people and systems* (SC) programme, and closely aligned to the **Delivering Care at Home** project within the programme.

Connection to the UK Industrial Strategy:

This project is directly linked to the [UK Industrial Strategy](#), which set out the government's plan to create an economy that boosts productivity and earning power throughout the UK. It identifies the need to harness the power of innovation to meet the needs of an ageing society as one of our great societal challenges. The project aims to contribute the following areas of the strategy:

- **Investing in science, research and innovation.** There is an opportunity to increase competitiveness in the HC sector through new understanding of its current and emergent business models, and how sustainable models that will attract investment and commercialisation might develop. The effective adoption of new business models is arguably just as important as new technologies in improving competitive advantage in the sector.
- **Developing skills.** To understand the skills needed in the HC sector and how to raise the skills level of the care workforce, it is necessary to assess the current sector's skills profile to develop a plan. Secondary data and new primary data collected from interviews and placements will form a well-defined picture of the sector's skills that are available and understand the needs of HC businesses.
- **Supporting businesses to start and grow.** To understand the motivations, barriers and enablers for HC businesses to start and grow, it is important to identify their needs and objectives. Only by deciding on the direction of the business and how to get there is it possible to achieve an alignment of skills. The next step would be to identify what skills are available to find out what is missing. This is done by profiling, the skills competencies of individuals and teams, identifying gaps and informing the management of training and development needs.
- **Driving growth across the whole country.** Low productivity is often linked to poor investment in technology and leadership skills. Investigating how HC businesses operate and how they recruit, train and retain their workforce can help employers build a skilled workforce and reach potential. Sector skills councils and the National Skills Academy help employers to address skills needs and training by setting the skills standards for sector-relevant and quality-assured training and qualifications.

Key studies in this topic involving members of the Sustainable Care team:

- **Home care in England: views from commissioners and providers** (2018) Jefferson, L. Bennett, L. [Hall, P.](#), Cream, J., Dale, V., Honeyman, M., Birks, Y., Bloor, K. & Murray, R. The King's Fund report.
- **The Goldilocks question: what size is 'just right' for social care providers?** (2018) [Glasby, J.](#), [Needham, C.](#), Allen, K., [Hall, K.](#) & McKay, S. *International Journal of Care and Caring* 2(1): 65-87.
- **How financial cutbacks affect job quality and care of the elderly** (2016). [Burns, D.](#), Hyde, P. & Killelt, A. *Industrial Labour Relations Review* 69(4): 991-1016.

Sustainable Care partners and advisors:

The [Care Quality Commission](#) (the independent regulator of all health and social care services in England) and [Care England](#) (a registered charity and the leading representative body for independent care services in England) are both represented on the SC Advisory Board. The CQC reports annually on the sector (**State of Care 2018**) and in 2017 published a report on their initial programme of comprehensive inspections in adult social care (**The state of adult social care services 2014 to 2017**). In 2017, Care England published a report on **Meeting the Needs of a 21st Century Society: Care England Manifesto for the Independent Care Sector**.

To connect to Dr Karla Zimpel-Leal, or the Delivering Care at Home research team:

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Sustainable Care: connecting people and systems