NEWS RELEASE FROM
THE REGISTERED NURSING HOME ASSOCIATION

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RNHA CALLS FOR INDEPENDENT SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN EXPANDING CARE HOME CAPACITY TO ALLEVIATE PRESSURES ON NHS ACUTE HOSPITAL BEDS:

RESPONSE TO LORD CARTER’S SUGGESTIONS ON ACHIEVING HOSPITAL COST EFFICIENCIES

A suggestion from government adviser Lord Carter that NHS hospitals should unblock beds by building their own care home facilities has been questioned by the Registered Nursing Home Association (RNHA).

Against a background of integration of health and social care policy, the RNHA says it would make more sense to use spare capacity in existing care homes or to ask those independent sector providers to expand their facilities or construct new ones.

The RNHA stresses that the Care Act requires there to be a variety of social care providers to choose from in each locality.

This, it says, means that an NHS hospital setting up a care home of its own would not be in keeping with the spirit of the legislation, which is designed to ensure maximum choice for individuals and their families.

Commented RNHA chief executive officer Frank Ursell: “For NHS hospitals to get involved in constructing new care homes would be a distraction from their main objective of treating acutely ill patients whilst balancing their increasingly pressurised finances.

“On the other hand, the idea of transferring patients who need rehabilitation into care home settings is potentially a better use of resources and could even result in patients recovering more quickly.”

He added: “We understand that, alongside his proposal for NHS care homes to be built, Lord Carter has suggested that hospital patients could be transferred to independent care homes. In our view that would be a more realistic, and more deliverable, proposition.

“Independent care homes represent a much more cost-effective solution than keeping people in hospital longer than absolutely necessary. Furthermore, we suspect that an NHS care home would turn out to be a lot more expensive to run than a typical independent care home.”
The latest figures published by the Care Quality Commission show that there are more than 17,000 care homes in England, of which around 4,700 provide nursing care in addition to personal care. Nursing homes alone cater for around 200,000 people.

Said Mr Ursell: “If Lord Carter’s suggestion about expanding care home capacity to take pressure off hospitals is a serious one, and if the Secretary of State is minded to pursue the suggestion, we would be happy to sit down with the Department of Health to explore how the independent sector could work with the NHS in achieving the objective.

“It would be unthinkable that the NHS might somehow go it alone on this one. The interests of patients, and the interests of the taxpayer, are best served by the independent sector working in partnership with the NHS.”

He concluded: “We have care homes in every community. We have more beds in nursing homes than the NHS. We have the management experience and professional expertise in providing this type of care. Our model of care is delivered at a much lower cost than the NHS is ever likely to achieve. So let us work together for everyone’s benefit.”

END

Notes to editors:

Lord Carter is advising the Secretary of State for Health on how hospital budgets can be better spent. Specifically, he is seeking to reduce variations between hospitals. One of his ideas is reported to be that, in order to reduce delayed discharges, NHS hospitals should consider building their own social care facilities or arrange for the patients who no longer need to be looked after on a hospital ward – but are not yet ready to go straight home – to move to private care homes.

For further information and comment please contact:

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