

## QUEEN'S SPEECH

### What does the Queen's Speech mean for those in later life?

Last week, the State Opening of Parliament took place, marked by the Queen's Speech, which sets out the Government's legislative priorities for the next parliamentary session. The speech was packed full of legislation that the Government were supposed to pass last session, but the pandemic and the temporary shut-down of Parliament put them severely behind schedule. As a result, there was little new information in the Queen's Speech, but there were several elements that could impact our members and older people more generally.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the speech was what was not included, with the Government facing criticism for the absence of detailed proposals on social care. Leader of the Opposition, Keir Starmer said it has been 657 days since the Prime Minister proclaimed on the steps of Downing Street that he would "*fix*" the crisis in social care, but we are still waiting on policy proposals. The Government has established a taskforce on social care, but many are disappointed with the lack of action. Chair of the influential Health and Social Care Committee and former Health Minister, Jeremy Hunt MP has said the Prime Minister needs the same "*bulldozer spirit*" to fix the social care crisis as he used to get Brexit done, because "*all it needs now is political will.*"

In the Queen's Speech, the Government committed to bring forward proposals for social care reform in 2021 "*to ensure that every person receives care that provides the dignity and security.*" However, given the legislative 'lag', there is no guarantee that they will deliver on this commitment in the next year. Social care has troubled Governments for decades and following Theresa May's proposal, widely dubbed as the "*death tax*" which significantly impacted the Conservative Party's electoral success, it is seen as a political nightmare. Continuing to dodge this complicated but highly important issue could soon become as damaging as presenting a proposal for Boris Johnson's administration.

The Speech was not completely silent on social care altogether, it gave further detail of the Health and Care Bill, which the Government are set to introduce shortly. Whilst the Bill largely centres around innovation and digitalisation of the NHS, it will legislate for Integrated Care Systems in order to facilitate greater integration between health and care and more joined-up working. It will also include provisions to improve the oversight of how social care is commissioned and delivered.

One of the few new pieces of legislation included in the Queen's Speech was the proposed '*Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill*', which will legislate to implement the ruling of the McCloud and Sargeant cases and fix the discrimination against younger pension schemes members that stemmed from the pension reforms introduced in 2015. The Bill also seeks to ensure that public servants, such as police officers, teachers and civil servants have greater certainty about their benefit entitlement and ensure they can make informed choices at retirement. All those currently in service will be members of these reformed pension schemes from April 2022.

A clear priority for Government in this parliamentary session is the '*Online Safety Bill*'. Aimed at reducing the harm that can be inflicted, particularly on children via social media, the Bill is wide ranging and places a duty of care on social media giants such as Facebook and Twitter. After significant lobbying, the Government has announced that the Bill will now include provisions to protect people from user-generated fraud. This means online companies will have to take responsibility for tackling some fraudulent content, such as posts made by users, on their platforms including romance scams and fake investment opportunities posted on Facebook groups. This will not extend however to the whole range of fraud and scams that can impact our members, such as fraud via advertising, email or text scams and cloned websites. We are working with parliamentarians to raise awareness about the

harm these scams cause and the fear it creates, which can discourage many older people from using the internet at all.

LLA will continue working with the Government and parliamentarians to ensure that our members interests are represented across the whole of the Government's legislative agenda.