

April 2011 Bulletin
Professional series: Policy & Research update

Dear Readers

Welcome to this month's round-up of policy and research items that affect older citizens and people who work for, and with them.

In March, the biggest news was the Government's Budget 2011 and how it affects older people (see Money matters and Work & learning). But there are plenty of other noteworthy items, including the Localism Bill (Communities), findings from the first wave of the UK's household longitudinal study (Cross-cutting), and interesting developments in Equality, and Health and Social Care.

Age UK also has a new website section for professionals, with useful information and resources, including our back catalogue of reports and articles. Please visit us!

<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/professional-resources-home/?itc=0&ito=2413&itv=1032738837509>

Warm regards
Susan Davidson

This month's Spotlight on:

TIPS FOR BETTER LIGHTING: Part Two - Kitchens

In the last edition, Thomas Pocklington Trust talked about the importance of lighting in the homes of older people. This month begins a series of advice for lighting different areas of the home. http://www.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Housing/Pocklington%20Trust%20-%20good%20lighting%20in%20kitchens_pro.pdf?itc=0?dtrk=true

Below are the areas covered in this issue:

Cross-cutting issues Improving care services for older gay users; using care records to keep older people independent; and findings from the first wave of the UK's household longitudinal study	Health & wellbeing GP Patient Survey; Malnutrition risk on admission to UK hospitals; NHS staff survey; and other items on public health
Social care Counsel and Care report; Report on Liberty Safeguards; Homecare Re-ablement Toolkit; Local Authority spending on adult social care; and several items on dementia	Communities Localism Bill consultation; an inquiry into Big Society; and review of local government statutory responsibilities
Money matters 2011 Budget; Hutton Public Service Pensions Report; OECD Report on Pensions and Retirement; IFS: Fall in living standards; and other items around	Equality & human rights Items on age discrimination; the Equality Act 2010; and abuse of vulnerable adults

pensions and benefits	
Work & learning Budget 2011; More older people working for longer; and sharing customer data between DWP and local authorities: Call for evidence	Housing & homes Items on UK Fuel Poverty; Disabled Facilities Grant; Handy person scheme assessment; Welfare Reform and housing; and many more

April 2011 professional Policy & Research Update e-bulletin

Cross-cutting issues

Improving health and social care services for older gay users

This Equality & Human Rights paper

(http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/dont_look_back_improving_health_and_social_care.pdf) considers the perspectives of older lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people and why it is important to their situation as users of health and social care services.

Using health and social care records could help keep older people independent for longer

A Nuffield Trust report, Predicting social care costs: a feasibility study

(<http://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/publications/detail.aspx?id=145&PRid=758>), says:

“Being able to identify those people most at risk of beginning high-cost care so that they might be offered intensive ‘upstream’ preventive care and support could potentially promote independent living and be more cost-effective. One way of identifying people who are at high risk is with predictive risk models, so that preventive care can be effectively targeted.”

Early findings from the first wave of the UK's household longitudinal study

Understanding Society, which will follow 40,000 UK households, is a major social science investment in longitudinal studies with potentially huge long-term implications for the understanding of the UK in the early 21st Century.

The first in a series of publications, the volume and individual chapters from it are available to download. (<http://research.understandingsociety.org.uk/findings/early-findings>)

Health & wellbeing

GP Patient Survey

The Department of Health has made results of this survey available

(<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/PublishedSurvey/GPpatientsurvey2007/index.htm>). Around 5 million registered patients in England were invited to take part during January to December 2010, and over 2 million responded. The survey covers issues such as how easy or difficult it is for patients to make an appointment at their surgery, satisfaction with opening hours, and the quality of care received from their GP and practice nurses, amongst other things. Results can be accessed by practice, PCT, SHA, and a summary of all. There is also an NHS dentistry report.

Malnutrition risk on admission to UK hospitals

In this Nutrition Screening Week survey (winter-2010) (<http://www.bapen.org.uk/pdfs/nsw/nsw10/nsw10-report.pdf>) 'malnutrition' was found to affect more than 1 in 3 adults on admission to hospitals, more than 1 in 3 adults admitted to care homes in the previous 6 months, and 1 in 5 in adults on admission to Mental health Units in the UK. In some centres no screening tools were being used and /or no training on nutritional screening provided.

Whilst nutritional screening is linked to care plans in most institutions this is not routinely followed through into discharge planning. Continuity of nutritional care could therefore be hindered. Consistent and integrated strategies to detect, prevent and treat 'malnutrition' should exist within and between all care settings.

NHS staff survey 2010

The Care Quality Commission has just published the eighth annual survey of NHS staff.

(<http://www.cqc.org.uk/aboutcqc/howwedoit/engagingwithproviders/nhsstaffsurveys/staffsurvey2010.cfm>) The results help trusts to review and improve the work experiences of their staff so that they can provide better care to patients. The Department of Health will also use the results to inform commissioning, service improvement and performance measurement, and to review and inform NHS policies.

The results of the survey will be used to:

- inform patients and the public of each trust's results
- feed CQC's regulatory activities such as the monitoring of ongoing compliance and reviews

Health Systems in Transition

The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies has published a report Health Systems in Transition: United Kingdom (England): Health System Review 2011 (<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/LSEHealthAndSocialCare/LSEHealth/pdf/HiTreportEngland.pdf>). The Health Systems in Transition (HiT) profiles are country-based reports that provide a detailed description of a health system and of policy initiatives in progress or under development. HiTs examine different approaches to the organization, financing and delivery of health services and the role of the main actors in health systems; describe the institutional framework, process, content and implementation of health and health care policies; and highlight challenges and areas that require more in-depth analysis.

Public Health Consultation

The Government consultation on the future of Public Health (<http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Liveconsultations/index.htm>) has ended on 31 March. It consulted on changes to the public health system, on the funding and commissioning of public health and on a new outcomes framework for public health.

Age UK has submitted responses to these (where the response will be in early April: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/professional-resources-home/policy/health-and-wellbeing/>). The key points of our responses were:

- There is both a need to optimise health at all ages as well as scope to do so.
- Public health professionals should remember that it is never too late to benefit from healthy living.
- The health needs of the growing and increasingly diverse ageing population must be reflected in local and national public health.

- The Public Health Outcomes Framework must reflect public health of an older population. Indicators that have the potential to improve health across the life-course should be incentivised.

Alcohol consumption and dementia

A recent study found that light to moderate daily drinking (2-3 standard drinks) was correlated with a reduced incidence of dementia in people aged 75 and over. The article is: Current alcohol consumption and its relationship to incident dementia: results from a 3-year follow-up study among primary care attenders aged 75 years and older (<http://ageing.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/by/section>) (DOI 10.1093/ageing/afr007).

The Science of Ageing – Global Progress

The British Society for Research on Ageing (BSRA) is having their annual conference 11th-14th July 2011, at the Hilton Metropole, Brighton. For registration and to view the programme, see their website (<http://www.bsra.org.uk/>)

Social care

New approach to quality and outcomes in social care

The 2011/12 Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework and the formal Government response to the consultation Transparency in outcomes: a framework for quality in adult social care can be found at:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Consultations/Responsestoconsultations/DH_125464

Counsel and Care report

Counsel and Care have published their annual Care Concerns report, (http://www.counselandcare.org.uk/category/publications-for-professionals/pdf/care-concerns-2010?dm_i=4X7.E6L1.2CQ8D2.14O9J.1) which this year shows that the one of top problems reported by callers to their advice service was incorrect or illegal advice given by their local council. This has been found to link closely to council cut backs in services, resulting in a refusal to assess new people for eligibility. The other main issues for people were the hospital discharge process where relatives were often discharged without proper involvement from social services, and also issues relating to payment of care home fees, such as standard requests for third party top ups and refusal by some councils to declare what they will pay for a care home place.

Report on Liberty Safeguards

The Care Quality Commission has published The operation of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards in England, 2009/10 (http://www.cqc.org.uk/publications.cfm?fde_id=17259). The Mental Capacity Act Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards came into force on 1 April 2009. The Safeguards provide a legal framework for hospitals and care homes to obtain a power to lawfully deprive people who are using their services of their liberty. This applies when they lack capacity to consent to their care or treatment. The safeguards aim to protect some of the most vulnerable people in our society. The CQC's monitoring report describes what is working well, what is not, and issues raised.

Homecare Re-ablement Toolkit

DoH Care Services Efficiency Delivery (CSED) has put together this toolkit (<http://www.csed.dh.gov.uk/homeCareReablement/Toolkit/>) to help councils looking to introduce a new homecare re-ablement service or extend or improve an existing service.

It has been developed as a practical project support to councils and builds on extensive work done by CSED in:

- compiling a body of evidence on how homecare re-ablement services are helping to appropriately reduce the level of ongoing homecare support required
- working actively with councils to identify successful approaches, learning points and best practice

Dementia care in London:

The Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) has published a new briefing on dementia care in London.

(<http://www.ippr.org.uk/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=808>)

Providing high-quality care and support for the increasing numbers of people with dementia is one of the most challenging and complex issues of our time. The number of people with dementia is set to double to 1.4 million in the next 30 years and the costs are expected to treble. This briefing identifies areas of unmet need, highlights problems with current provision, and draws attention to models of best practice.

Black and minority ethnic people with dementia

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) has published Research briefing 35: Black and minority ethnic people with dementia and their access to support and services (<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings/briefing35/index.asp>).

This briefing discusses the barriers currently faced by BME people in accessing dementia care services and some of the ways in which services can become better at responding to the needs of BME people in their locality.

Standards of care to expect if you receive support or treatment in a care home or in your own home

The Care Quality Commission has published two guides for people who receive care in a care home or in their own home. Both booklets provide information on important changes to the way care is regulated in England, and can be downloaded below:

What standards to expect from the regulation of your care home -

http://www.cqc.org.uk/publications.cfm?fde_id=17239

What standards to expect from the regulation of agencies that provide care in your own home - http://www.cqc.org.uk/publications.cfm?fde_id=17240

Looming crisis of care home bed shortage

Research undertaken by BUPA

(www.epolitix.com/fileadmin/epolitix/stakeholders/BUPA_Who_Cares.pdf) has shown that unless action is taken in the short term, burdens on the NHS could become unmanageable because of the rising numbers of older people who may need care. The research shows that by 2020 there could be a reduction of 81,000 specialist beds in care homes because Local Authorities are not paying adequate fees to homes, and this combined with an additional 18,000 more people than today needing a care home place could mean that there is a 100,000 bed shortfall.

BUPA is calling on the Government to ring-fence the £2bn for social care announced in the Spending Review last year, Local Authorities to assess and predict the future demand in their area for care home places, and has also called for a common national system of social care assessment.

How to save money in dementia care and deliver better outcomes for people with dementia?

The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) has published their responses to the 2011 inquiry of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Dementia (http://www.adass.org.uk/images/stories/Press_Releases_2011/APPG%20Dementia%20Inquiry.doc). Included are their ideas on the best opportunities (and barriers) to save money but ensure quality of life for people with dementia, and how to provide good care and support for people with dementia in a way that makes best use of resources.

Local authority spending on adult social care

Cairneagle (<http://www.cairneagle.com/downloads/InsightBudgetCuts-Dec2010.pdf>) has surveyed 80 local authorities regarding their provision of adult social care in order to reveal the current state of the market. We have also analysed future local authority spending plans in light of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in order to project market trends out to 2015.

Learning from the experiences of older people and their carers

Social Care Institute for Excellence's (SCIE) latest report is on older people's experiences of using personal budgets (<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/atagance/atagance40.asp>) Key findings include that the biggest concerns are managing the money and understanding what it can be spent on, and assumptions should not be made about what care and support older people need and want.

Communities

Localism Bill - Community rights consultation

The Government is consulting on new powers that are included in the Localism Bill: The community right to challenge and the community right to buy. Read more about Age UK's perspective. <https://epi-editorial.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Communities-and-inclusion/Localism%20Bill-additional%20link.doc?dtrk=true>

Taking part: The national survey of culture, leisure and sport January - December 2010

The latest rolling estimates from the 2010/11 Taking Part adult survey produced by DCMS were released on 31 March 2011 according to the arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority. Some of the figures include statistics on older people. http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/research/Taking_Part_Y6_Q3_Jan-Dec10.pdf

Public Administration Select Committee - Big Society Inquiry

The Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) is undertaking an inquiry into the Government's proposals. (<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-administration-select-committee/inquiries/smaller-government-bigger-society/>). The Committee are asking a broad range of questions about the concept of Big Society - starting with a definition and covering implications for everyone involved, including the voluntary and community sector, central and local government.

Review of local government statutory responsibilities

The Department of Communities and Local Government has launched a review of all statutory duties placed on local government. (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/tacklingburdens/reviewstatutoryduties/>) Although the DCLG is not responsible for all legislative areas, 15 other Government Departments have contributed to the review. The statutory duties referred to include all legislation that governs the provision of adult social care, although the review notes that most of this legislation is already under review by the Law Commission. The consultation will be open for 6 weeks, closing on April 25th.

Money matters

Hutton Public Service Pensions Report

Lord Hutton of Furness has published his final report on public service pension provision (http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/indreview_johnhutton_pensions.htm) in which he set out his recommendations to the Government on pension arrangements. He has recommended that public sector employees should be transferred to 'career average' defined benefit schemes for future service, but that the link to final salary should be retained for past service. Among other recommendations, the Review recommends that scheme pension ages should be increased to the State Pension Age.

IFS comments on public pensions schemes

The Institute for Fiscal Studies is awaiting government decisions to make full comment, but at present has published early observations: (<http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/5505>) "...what (Lord Hutton's) reforms would do overall to the generosity of these schemes to public sector workers will not be known until a decision on other key parameters is announced. This will also affect the cost to the taxpayer of these schemes. In particular, Lord Hutton's report leaves open the choice of accrual rate in these schemes and the level of employee contributions."

Response to the call for evidence on early access to pension savings

In December, the Government called for evidence on early access to pension savings (http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/consult_early_access_pension_savings.htm) In the Coalition Agreement the Government pledged to explore the potential to give people greater flexibility in accessing part of their private pension fund early.

Age UK's response can be read here: <https://epi-editorial.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Money-and->

[benefits/HMT%20Early%20Access%20to%20Pension%20Savings%20\(Age%20UK\).pdf?dtrk=true](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/benefits/HMT%20Early%20Access%20to%20Pension%20Savings%20(Age%20UK).pdf?dtrk=true)

Replacement of Discretionary Social Fund

The Welfare Reform Bill currently before Parliament abolishes the discretionary social fund which provides cash payments to people on low incomes. Instead it is proposed that there will be a nationally administered advance of benefit facility that will replace Budgeting Loans and some aspects of Crisis Loans and new locally based provision to replace Community Grants and Crisis Loans for general living expenses. A call for evidence has been published around the local scheme (<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2011/local-support-replace-ccg-cl.shtml>). This is not intended to replicate the current system – local authorities will be given flexibility to re-design emergency provision according to local circumstances. The paper asks for views by 15 April 2011.

OECD Report on Pensions and Retirement

This edition of OECD Pensions at a Glance series (http://www.oecd.org/document/30/0,3746,en_2649_34757_42992113_1_1_1_1,00.html) looks at pensions, retirement, and life expectancy. It concludes that recent reforms will still be insufficient to cover increased pension costs in the future, despite increases in retirement ages in half of OECD countries. It also concludes that countries need to do more to fight discrimination, to provide training opportunities for older workers and to improve their working conditions.

The Age UK response can be found here: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/get-involved/campaign/state-pension-age-campaign/>

Fall in living standards

A report (<http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/5517>) by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) has estimated that between 2008 to 2011 real household incomes will have fallen by 1.6% - whereas since 1961 over a typical three year period real incomes would be expected to rise by about 5%. Pensioners will be particularly hard hit by the reduction in interest from savings. The IFS expect the income of a pensioner household with median income to fall by 2.4% or £460 a year between 2008-08 and 2011-12.

The Welfare Reform Bill

The Bill (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/154/11154.pdf>) and Explanatory Notes

(<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/154/en/11154en.pdf>) aims to amalgamate many of the current working age benefits into a single payment, known as Universal Credit, and make sure that everyone will be better off in work. Therefore all those out of work would receive this benefit, rather than for example Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Income Support. It also strengthens some of the conditionality arrangements for unemployed, making sanctions for failing to meet job-seeking objectives even tougher. UC claimants will have to sign a 'Claimants Agreement' detailing what is expected of them in order to qualify for the benefit. This in effect will replace the Jobseekers Agreement, which JSA claimants currently sign. This will be based around four areas:

- Attending a work-focussed interview with Jobcentre Plus

- Work preparation
- Work search
- Work availability

Age UK has written a response.

Contributions of over 65s to the economy

WRVS has published Gold Age Pensioners: Valuing the Socio-Economic Contribution of Older People in the UK (<http://www.goldagepensioners.com/research>).

"Our research finds that in 2010, over 65s, through taxes, spending power, provision of social care and the value of their volunteering, made an astonishing net contribution of £40 billion to the UK economy.

And as the overall number of people over 65 increases and people remain healthier for longer, opportunities to make a positive contribution through work or volunteering will only grow. We estimate that in 2030 the positive net contribution of over 65s will grow to £77 billion."

Cheque replacement and financial inclusion

The WMS regarding cheque replacement and financial inclusion has now been published.

(<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm110303/wmstext/110303m0001.htm#11030354000022>)

The DWP has announced that a new system will replace payment of benefits by girocheque. (<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/newsroom/press-releases/2011/mar-2011/dwp025-11.shtml>) Citibank will provide a new-over-the-counter service at PayPoint outlets, starting in 2012, and payments by cheque will be phased out gradually.

Age UK is aware that girocheques are important to some pensioners, and in particular those who are reliant on other people for help in accessing cash. It is vital that the new service meets their needs and that they have the information and advice they need to switch. We are liaising with the DWP.

The use of vesting rules and default options in occupational pension schemes

This report (<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/summ2011-2012/725summ.pdf>) provides the findings from a study for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), examining the use of two aspects of trust-based defined contribution (DC) pension schemes: vesting rules and default options. Both elements of this research will help DWP understand more about how trust-based DC pension schemes operate in the run-up to the implementation of the workplace pension reforms in 2012.

Equality & human rights

Age discrimination

As a part of its work to promote age equality and tackle discrimination and disadvantage based on age, Age UK has published a briefing based on analysis of

the European Social Survey completed by EURAGE: A Snapshot of Ageism in the UK and across Europe ([https://epi-editorial.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Money-and-benefits/HMT%20Early%20Access%20to%20Pension%20Savings%20\(Age%20UK\).pdf?dtrk=true](https://epi-editorial.ageuk.org.uk/Documents/EN-GB/For-professionals/Money-and-benefits/HMT%20Early%20Access%20to%20Pension%20Savings%20(Age%20UK).pdf?dtrk=true)). Key findings include:

- Age discrimination is more commonly experienced than race or gender discrimination.
- Ageism commonly manifests as disrespect rather than direct insults or abuse.
- Europeans think that old age starts at 62, rather below pension age in most countries. In the UK the age is even lower, at 59.
- Older people are perceived as having the lowest social status, compared with young people or middle-aged people, who have the highest status.
- Friendships across Europe are age-segregated, with very few younger people having friends from older age groups and vice-versa.

Consultation on ending harmful age discrimination

The government is gathering feedback for the Equality Act 2010: Ending age discrimination in services, public functions and associations - A consultation. (http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010/age_consultation_2011.aspx)

The consultation website states, "Before implementing the new age discrimination ban, we want to ensure that the new law prohibits only harmful treatment that results in genuinely unfair discrimination because of age. It should not outlaw the many instances of different treatment that are justifiable or beneficial."

As expected, the consultation confirms that there are no proposed exemptions in the area of health and social care, which is something Age UK welcomes. However in relation to the proposed exemption for financial services we are very concerned at the breadth of the proposed exception which reaches far beyond insurance services. We raise these concerns in our response to the consultation and will continue to campaign for all financial services to be included within the scope of the legislation. The consultation ends on May 25th and Age UK will be submitting a full response.

Improving health and social care services for older gay users

This Equality & Human Rights paper

(http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/dont_look_back_improving_health_and_social_care.pdf) considers the perspectives of older lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people and why it is important to their situation as users of health and social care services.

Equality Act 2010: Public sector equality

On 17 March 2011, Ministers announced a review of the specific duties for the new public sector equality duty (<http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/110317%20Public%20sector%20Equality%20Duty%20-%20Policy%20review%20paper.pdf>). They confirmed that the general duty will come into force as planned on 5 April 2011 but the draft regulations which had previously been set out will be revised. These new proposals aim to ensure 'that public bodies consider equality when carrying out their functions without imposing unnecessary burdens and bureaucracy.' The Government Equalities Office (GEO) will be taking comments on the new proposals until 21 April 2011.

Bill of Rights Commission

On 18th March the Government announced the terms of reference for the Commission on a UK Bill of Rights (<http://www.justice.gov.uk/news/newsrelease180311a.htm>) and the names of those appointed to the Commission. The Commission will be chaired by former Permanent Secretary Sir Leigh Lewis and has been asked to report no later than by the end of 2012.

Age UK's response to the announcement can be found here.

(<http://www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-press/response-to-announcement-of-bill-of-rights-commission/>)

Abuse of Vulnerable Adults in England: new statistics

The NHS Information Centre has published experimental statistics on the abuse of vulnerable adults in England (<http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/social-care/adult-social-care-information/abuse-of-vulnerable-adults-in-england--october-2009--march-2010-experimental-statistics>). The statistics are based on returns from local authorities between October 2009 and March 2010. Key findings include:

- 25% of all referrals from local authorities concerned the abuse of someone aged 85 or over;
- The majority of referrals came from social care and health staff;
- In 24% of referrals the abuser was a social care worker;
- 38% of referrals concerned abuse in a person's own home and 21% abuse in a care home;
- The main types of abuse encountered were physical abuse (31%), neglect and financial abuse (both 21%), and emotional and psychological abuse (17%);
- In 37% of referrals abuse was partly or wholly substantiated. The most common outcome for the victim, apart from 'no further action,' was increased monitoring.

Housing and homes

The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy 2011

This is the Department of Energy and Climate Change response to the consultation on amending reference to the Warm Front Scheme eligibility criteria (<http://www.decc.gov.uk/assets/decc/Consultations/warm-front-eligibility/1441-govtresp-warm-front-eligibility.pdf>)

Disabled Facilities Grant methodology

The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) have published research (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/dfgallocationmethodology>) looking at how disabled facilities grant (DFG) is currently allocated and how it might be distributed in the future. It notes that 'Analysis using English house condition survey data has indicated that the total amount required to cover grants for all of those who are theoretically eligible under the current rules is £1.9bn at 2005 prices.

This is more than ten times higher than the total amount of disabled facilities grant allocated in England in 2009-10 (£157m).'

Handy person scheme assessment

York University have produced their interim findings in an evaluation of handy person services (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1837939.pdf>) funded by CLG. This amounted to £13m in 2009/10 and £17m in 2010/11. Funding will continue for this financial year but will no longer be ring fenced. A final report will be available in autumn 2011.

Welfare Reform Bill and housing benefit

The Department of Work and Pensions have published an equality impact assessment (<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/eia-social-sector-housing-under-occupation-wr2011.pdf>) on housing benefit restrictions for under-occupation in social housing. It is estimated that around 170,000 people of working age between 55 and retirement age will be affected, with an average benefit loss of £14.

CLG webpage update

CLG have updated their webpage on older people's housing (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingolderpeople/>) which contains new and recent policy material.

Statement on flexible tenancies

Andrew Stunell, housing and regeneration minister, has said that the Government expects all older people to be offered lifetime tenancies. (<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/localism/stages.html>) Although this guarantee will not be in the Localism Bill, it may form part of guidance through a new 'tenancy empowerment standard'.

Leasehold Accreditation and retirement housing

CARLEX and the Leasehold Knowledge Partnership are developing an approved list of managing agents and developer through their own accreditation process. For further details visit the Leasehold Knowledge website. (<http://www.leaseholdknowledge.com>)

Review of statutory obligations and older people's housing

CLG have produced a list of statutory obligations (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/tacklingburdens/reviewstatutoryduties/>), across government departments, that it intends to review. Many of these could affect older people's housing. For example, reference to legislation protecting leaseholders.

Housing and Ageing Alliance

The Housing and Ageing Alliance (which includes Age UK) have produced a promotional leaflet (<http://www.careandrepair-england.org.uk/pdf/haab.pdf>).

Work & learning

More older people working for longer

The ONS has released statistics about changes in the older work force over the last decade (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=2648>). One finding is that over the last decade these older workers are making up an increasing percentage of the total workforce in the UK, doubling from 1.5 per cent in 2001, to 3.0 per cent in 2010.

More ONS statistics on the labour market can be found here (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=15374>).

Sharing customer data between DWP and local authorities: Call for evidence

Department for Work and Pensions has a call for evidence (<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/hb-data-sharing-consultation.pdf>) seeking views about proposed new arrangements for sharing customer data between DWP and local authorities, in relation to the provision of welfare services.

Parliament is considering introducing regulation-making powers which will broaden current data sharing powers. If the new power is introduced customer details could be shared in more circumstances than is currently the case. The aim is to make it easier and simpler for customers to apply for and receive a range of different services and benefits. This call for evidence will provide an opportunity for all interested parties to submit their views.

End date: 25 April 2011