Fair Care, Fair Share, Fair Choice

Older people’s views on the Government’s Green Paper *Shaping the Future of Care Together*
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to older people</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea 1: Ending the postcode lottery</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea 2: More preventative services</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea 3: New ways to pay for care</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea 4: Stopping Attendance Allowance</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older carers</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What next?</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised meetings and listening events</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

In July 2009, the Government announced its ideas for improving the care and support system in its Green Paper *Shaping the Future of Care Together*.

Age Concern and Help the Aged has been talking to older people and their families to find out if they think the ideas in the Green Paper will improve the quality of care for older people.

In this report we look at the Government’s four biggest ideas and share with you older people’s views on each of these. We also let you know how Age Concern and Help the Aged thinks the care and support system can be improved.

**What is a Green Paper?**

A Green Paper is a discussion paper setting out the Government’s ideas on changing the law. While it is not a commitment to action, it is often the first step towards new legislation.
Thousands of older people have been letting us know their views, in various ways, on the Government’s ideas to improve care:

1. **Attended meetings**
Across England local Age Concerns and older people’s forums held meetings to enable older people to discuss the ideas in the Green Paper.

2. **Attended listening events**
A listening event is slightly different to a meeting. At these, people still talked about the Green Paper but the local MP also attended to listen to their thoughts and ideas on the future of care and support.

3. **Filled in a questionnaire**
People who could not attend a meeting shared their views by filling in a short questionnaire about care. The questionnaire was on our website and was sent out to older people by Age Concerns and through our Aid Call service.
Since July, Age Concerns and older people’s forums have organised 54 meetings involving hundreds of older people. Forty-one MPs, including ministers and shadow ministers, have attended to hear people’s views. We have also had over 1,000 questionnaires filled in and returned to us.

We have heard many people’s thoughts and views on how care should be improved but it is not possible to include every single view in this report. Instead, we have included the issues which have been raised most often.

Aid Call is the Age Concern and Help the Aged personal alarm service, currently used by over 40,000 customers.

Many Aid Call customers need care and support, either from the local council or from family and friends, but very few are asked to share their thoughts on the issue. Age Concern and Help the Aged felt it was important to find out the views of those who need care and support the most.

‘The discussions were very informative and I found it very interesting to hear the group’s views.’
(Listening event held by the BME Elders Forum)

Age Concern Sheffield listening event, October 2009

Croydon Older People’s Network listening event, October 2009
What’s in the Green Paper?

The Government knows that many older people do not get the help they need from their local council and often have to struggle on alone. It also knows that whether someone is eligible for care may depend on where they live. This ‘postcode lottery’ happens because local councils have different criteria to judge who receives care.

In the Green Paper, the Government says it wants a national care system with a national assessment of care needs. This should mean that all older people will be assessed in the same way and get the same proportion of care they need free from the Government – no matter where they live.

A national assessment is a way to make sure older people get the help and support we need, no matter where they live.

Instead of each local council deciding what care and support you should get, Government will set one test for everyone to go through to find out how much care and support they need in later life and how much they will get free from the Government.
What older people think

Responses to the questionnaire we sent out to Aid Call customers show that a postcode lottery exists. While some older people said they get good support from their local council, many said they do not get enough care and support and are dependent on support from their family and friends.

National care system

Older people feel strongly that the current care system is not fair and needs to change. They believe the care they get should be based on their needs and not their postcode.

They feel the care system needs to be made better by bringing in national standards and for care to be delivered locally to make sure local needs are met.

‘There needs to be a national strategy but delivered and accountable locally.’
(Listening event held by Merton Seniors’ Forum and Age Concern Merton)

National assessment

Older people agree with the Government’s idea to have a national assessment as they feel this will stop the current postcode lottery.

While there is much support for a national assessment, many older people are concerned about how it will actually work and feel that people will still get different levels of care, even if they have the same care needs, because the quality of assessors may vary across the country.

‘It would make sense to have a national assessment for care and not a county one, as that would mean that no matter where people lived they would receive the same amount of care.’
(Listening event held by Age Concern Oxfordshire City and County, Didcot)
Age Concern and Help the Aged agrees with these views.

We want:

- a national care system so everyone will know how much care they can get free from the Government

- national standards to ensure that all care is of a high quality

- a national assessment so that everyone will go through the same test to find out how much care and support they can get free from the Government.
What’s in the Green Paper?

The Green Paper talks about the need for more preventative services and says more help will be available to keep people well and independent for as long as possible, including:

• a wide range of support services to help older people remain in their own homes for as long as possible

• six weeks’ free care at home for anyone who leaves hospital needing care and support for the first time

• the promotion of telecare: telecare covers services that use technology to help provide care in the home. This could be a community alarm or a system with sensors that detects falls or fire and lets a response centre know that someone needs help.

Age Concern East Sussex Listening Event, November 2009
What older people think

Older people agree that more preventative services should be available.

The range of services suggested through the questionnaire and at our events is long and varied. It includes leisure activities, equipment such as stairlifts and bathroom aids, better housing and nursing support. Three services were mentioned more than any others:

- **help at home**  Many people talked about the importance of having different services which help them to remain in their own home, including help with shopping, cleaning and DIY

- **transport**  Many people discussed the need for good reliable local transport, especially in the countryside. They told us that being able to leave their own home is just as important as being able to stay in their own home

- **information**  Having access to accurate and reliable information about the care and support available locally is vital. While older people agree that more preventative services are needed there is concern over how much money there will be to pay for them.

Responses to the questionnaire we sent to Aid Call customers show that people do not feel that information is easily available.

There is overwhelming support for more information and advice to be made available at GP surgeries and to be sent through the post to people at home.

While older people agree that more preventative services are needed there is concern over how much money there will be to pay for them.

Older people talked about their local preventative services. Many people said their local services, such as foot care and falls awareness, have been reduced or closed because of lack of funding.

Some said they do not believe the Government will set up new preventative services when there is not enough money to keep existing services open.

‘Community transport should be readily available all the time.’
(Listening event run by Age Concern Blackburn and Darwen and Blackburn with Darwen Older People’s Forum)

‘How can the Government reconcile its promise to help people live independently in their own homes when local councils are cutting services because of a lack of money?’
(Listening event held by Age Concern Wirral)
More preventative services

What Age Concern and Help the Aged wants to see happen

Age Concern and Help the Aged wants the Government to:

• put more money into preventative services

• make sure preventative services include support for older people to get out of their homes, meet other people and be part of their local community.
What’s in the Green Paper?

There are five options on how care should be paid for. Under all five options, people living in care homes would still have to pay for board and lodging if they can afford to:

**Option 1: pay for care yourself**
You pay for your own care. The Government pays nothing – even for the poorest.

**Option 2: partnership**
The Government pays for part of your care, while you pay the rest. The amount you pay will vary depending on how well-off you are and how much care you need, with the poorest getting free care.

**Option 3: insurance**
The Government pays for part of your care and you can take out insurance to cover the rest.

**Option 4: comprehensive**
On retirement, all but the poorest will pay about £20,000. You could pay a lump sum, in instalments or after you die by using the money from the sale of your house. This would cover all your future care costs.

**Option 5: tax-funded**
The Government would increase tax to pay all care costs.
The Government rejected options 1 and 5 before the consultation began.

**What older people think**

Older people were very upset to find out the Government had already ruled out option 5: increasing tax to pay for care. The majority of the older people we spoke to feel an increase in taxes is the fairest way to pay for care, and want the Government to reconsider this option.

Older people are less sure about the insurance and comprehensive options. They feel they need more information on how each option will work before they form an opinion.

‘I believe the only fair way to fund a care system would be an increase in taxation. In this way everyone would be contributing fairly in proportion to their earning throughout their working life. All other proposals can be likened to “rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic” and are doomed to bureaucracy and failure. Nobody likes an increase in income tax but sometimes it is the only way.’

(Quote from a questionnaire response)

‘It was felt that the proposed schemes did not cover accommodation costs in care homes and this would result in ongoing financial demands for people.’

(Listening event held by Age Concern Leicester Shire and Rutland)

Croydon Older People’s Network listening event, October 2009
New ways to pay for care

What Age Concern and Help the Aged wants to see happen

Age Concern and Help the Aged wants:

- the Government to put more money into the care and support system immediately

- more information on all the new ways to pay for care before we will say which one is the best option

- a care and support system that is not funded by stopping Attendance Allowance (see page 16).
Idea 4

Stopping Attendance Allowance

What’s in the Green Paper?

The Government is saying it may stop Attendance Allowance for new claimants from 2014 and use the money to help fund a national care system.

Currently, older people have to apply for disability benefits separately to applying for care and support. The Government says that some older people are confused by this system and miss out on much-needed money.

The Government says that, by stopping Attendance Allowance and putting the money into the national care system, it will make it simpler for people to claim and get all the help and support to which they are entitled.

Attendance Allowance is a benefit for people aged 65 or over who need extra help because of a physical disability or mental health need. It is intended to cover the extra costs of disability.
What older people think

This idea received a very strong response. Older people do not want Attendance Allowance to stop and are upset that the Government has put this forward as an idea.

When older people talk about Attendance Allowance, they say how important it is. Attendance Allowance helps people to stay independent and they like being able to spend it on the things that help them most. For some older people Attendance Allowance helps to keep them out of poverty.

‘It is often the one thing that keeps people going, or “ticking over”. People felt it kept things from breaking down around the person who is trying to remain independent. This is in the sense that it helps pay for cleaning, laundry, gardening and shopping.’ (Listening event held by Age Concern Leicester Shire and Rutland)

Older people are upset that the Government has said it may stop Attendance Allowance but will keep Disability Living Allowance for people under 65.

It is felt that these benefits are very similar, and stopping Attendance Allowance for over-65s but not Disability Living Allowance for under-65s could be seen as age discrimination.

‘Is this not discrimination on the grounds on age? AA is paid to over-65s . . . Withdrawing it will leave people worse off. Yet DLA for under-65s will not be affected . . . How will you avoid age discrimination?’ (Listening event held by Age Concern East Sussex)

Age Concern Sheffield listening event, October 2009
What Age Concern and Help the Aged wants to see happen

Stopping Attendance Allowance

Age Concern and Help the Aged wants:

• a care system that is not funded by stopping Attendance Allowance

• a care system that keeps the positive features of Attendance Allowance, such as the ability to choose how to spend the money, and a system of support to meet the extra costs of health needs

• a care system that is not funded by stopping Disability Living Allowance for over-65s.
Older carers

Will the Green Paper convince politicians to make fixing the care and support system an urgent priority?

What’s in the Green Paper?

The Green Paper does not contain any specific ideas that will improve support for carers. But some of the ideas in the Green Paper to improve the care system will help carers indirectly. For example:

- a national care system with a national assessment (page 4) will benefit carers as they will know that their loved one will get the care they are entitled to.

- better information and advice should make it easier for carers to get the information they need about the care and support that is available locally.
What older people think

Responses to the questionnaire we sent out to Aid Call customers show that older people are often the main carer for their partner while family members provide care and support when they can.

While they are happy to do this, it often puts them under a lot of pressure. Many older people who are caring for a loved one have to use their savings to pay for extra items that are needed, such as special equipment or changes to the house. Or they can become ill because so much of their time is taken up with caring.

What Age Concern and Help the Aged wants to see happen

Age Concern and Help the Aged wants a care system that offers the right support to carers so they can care for their loved ones without becoming ill, spending all their savings or giving up their own life outside of caring.

‘There needs to be much more recognition of the contribution that carers make to society in terms of monetary credit being given to carers at the point of needing care.’ (Listening event held by Age Concern Dorchester in association with Dorset Community Action and Dorset Association of Senior Forums)
In 2009 all the political parties announced ideas on how the care and support system could be improved. In 2010, we want the government, whichever party that may be, to make urgent improvements to the care system.

In the improved care system we want to see:

- **more preventative services for all older people** Preventative services help people to age in an active and healthy way. They also help the care system to remain sustainable by minimising the length of time expensive care and support is needed.

- **good-quality care** From talking to thousands of older people we know that the current care and support system is creaking at the seams. It is not providing high-quality care to all older people who need it. The improved care system must provide better care for all older people.

- **support for family carers** Family carers must not be forgotten in any improvements made to the care system. We want a care system that offers the right support to carers so they can care for their loved ones without becoming ill or spending all their savings.
- **keeping Attendance Allowance** This benefit provides a lifeline to many older people. It must not be made means-tested

- **improved funding** We believe that the only way the care system can be improved in the immediate future is for the Government to reprioritise £370 million each year, moving it from the National Health Service to the care system. This represents just 0.4 per cent of the health budget and could be paid for through efficiency gains in the NHS. There must be a political consensus about how to raise extra funding in the long term.
Age Concern and Help the Aged would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our Green Paper events, including:

- Age Concerns and older people’s forums that arranged and hosted an event
- all the MPs including ministers and shadow ministers who listened and responded to the issues raised
- Aid Call staff for sending out our care questionnaire
- every individual who gave up their time to attend an event or to fill in a questionnaire.
Age Concerns and forums that held an event:

**Age Concerns**
- Barnsley
- Berkshire
- Bexley
- Blackburn and Darwen jointly with Blackburn with Darwen Older People’s Forum
- Brent
- Brighton, Hove and Portslade jointly with the Brighton older people’s council
- Cambridgeshire
- Darlington
- Dorchester jointly with the Dorset Association of Senior Forums and Dorset Community Action’s Voice Project
- East Sussex
- Haringey
- Hillingdon
- Lambeth jointly with the Lambeth Pensioners Action Group and Lambeth Forum for older people
- Leicester Shire & Rutland
- Lincoln
- Liverpool jointly with Liverpool Physical Disability Network and Learning Disability Network
- Mid Mersey
- Newham
- North Staffordshire
- North West Cumbria
- Northamptonshire
- Oldham jointly with the Oldham Older People’s Forum and the neighbourhood care network
- Oxford City and County
- Redbridge
- Sheffield
- Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin
- Somerset
- South Lakeland
- Sutton
- Teesside jointly with Redcar & Cleveland Older People’s Partnership
- Wirral

**Forums and other groups**
- Barnsley
- BME Elders Forum
- Bradford Alliance on Community Care
- Croydon older people’s network
- Experts by Experience
- Huddersfield & District Pensioners’ Organisation
- Merton Seniors Forum
- Redditch Older People’s Forum
- South Ribble older people’s forum working with Age Concern central Lancaster
- Stratford upon Avon forums
- Swadlincote District 50+ Forum
From spring 2010, Age Concern and Help the Aged will be called Age UK. Age UK will work in partnership with local Age Concerns.

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