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Care in Crisis 2014 - Is social care on the brink of disaster?

Age UK publishes damning new report

#careincrisis

Age UK today publishes a damning report which shows the disastrous depths that the crisis in care has reached and its distressing human cost.

The evidence and analysis set out in the report ‘Care in Crisis 2014’ shows the real depth of the problems with social care and support for older people in England today.

The report reveals that despite rising demand the amount spent on social care services for older people has dropped by a massive £1.2 billion (15.4 per cent) since 2010. Since then, to help compensate for substantial wider cuts in local government budgets, £438 million was transferred from the NHS budget to local authorities. However, this still leaves a shortfall of £769 million, even if every penny was spent on social care, which is unclear. Taking into account trends over the last decade, the scale of the crisis in care becomes clear. Even before the deep cuts in government funding for social care between 2010/11 and 2013/14, funding for older people’s social care had been broadly stagnant since 2005. Yet the number of people aged 85 and over, the group who are most likely to need care, has risen by 30 per cent between 2005 and 2014. (from 986,000 to 1,280,000).

As a result, access to publicly funded social care has become more and more restricted with the vast majority (87 per cent) of local authorities now only able to provide help if the person’s needs have been assessed as being ‘substantial’ or above (with a further two per cent only providing care for those with even more profound ‘critical needs’). Many older people who struggle with everyday tasks such as getting up in the morning, bathing, preparing meals or doing the shopping are assessed as only having ‘low’ or ‘moderate’ needs and so do not get any help.

The consequences of this tight rationing are that from 2005/6 to 2012/13 the number of people aged 65 and over in receipt of social care services dropped by a staggering 27.2 per cent - from 1,231,000 to 896,000 - even though the population in this age group has grown by more than one million. The trend in reduced access to care at home and community services is particularly stark as fewer and fewer older people now have access to this type of support that could enable them to remain in their own home for longer. Between 2005/6 and 2012/13 the number of older people able to access local authority funded day centres fell by 49 per cent, from 136,000 to 69,100, and the number of older people receiving home care...
fell by 21 per cent, from 489,000 to 384,600. In this time period, a third of councils have been forced to reduce the number of people who have access to their services by over 40 per cent.

In 2010 the Personal Social Services Research Unit at the London School of Economics estimated that there were at least 800,000 older people who needed help with everyday tasks but who did not receive any formal social care support. This figure is expected to have grown substantially since then as the number of people receiving help has fallen sharply at the same time as there has been significant growth in the numbers of older people likely to need care, those aged 85 and over.

The publication of the Age UK report comes as the Care Bill enters its final Report stages in Parliament. Age UK believes that the Care Bill is built on sound principles and that it could represent a significant step forward for older people who need care, but there is a huge risk of the reforms being fundamentally undermined by wholly inadequate funding. Age UK is calling for the Government to urgently invest in the social care system in this year’s Budget so it is able to deliver care and support to the older people who need it.

Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director at Age UK says:

“The figures we have uncovered in this report are catastrophic. Older people who need help and who are now not getting it are being placed at significant risk and families who care for loved ones are experiencing intolerable strain. If older people do not receive the care they need and as a consequence end up in A&E units and hospital wards, we have simply shifted people around the system at great financial cost and created distress and disruption for older people in the process. This makes absolutely no moral or economic sense.

“The Government deserves credit for bringing forward long overdue reforms to the social care system, but without the money to back them up older people will see little if any benefit. Integration, while the right approach, will not make up for a chronic lack of funds. Age UK is calling on the Government to use the Budget to invest in the social care system so it can deliver the care and support that older people need.

“At the moment too many older people who have contributed to society throughout their lives are being left to fend for themselves when they need care and support. We cannot continue to sacrifice their safety, health and dignity. Too many older people have suffered already. It is time for politicians in all parties to act.”

Age UK’s report ‘Care in Crisis 2014’ reveals that:

**The Better Care Fund**

- The Better Care Fund will be transferred from the NHS budget to local authorities and CCGs jointly. This is a considerable amount of money and is very welcome. However this is not new money and both NHS England and the LGA agree that the fund itself does not address the financial pressures faced by local authorities and CCGs in 2015/16, which remain very challenging.

Data comparing the number of local authority supported service users on the 31 March 2005/6 and 2012/13 show that:
The total number of older service users supported by local authorities dropped by 35 per cent from 845,000 to 548,000.

The number of older people receiving community services fell by 35 per cent from 645,000 to 418,000.

The number of older people receiving residential and nursing services fell by 17 per cent from 200,000 to 167,000.

**Increasing financial demands on those who receive services arranged by local councils:**

In the last 3 financial years average fees and charges have increased by over 16 per cent, despite the fact that there are fewer service users. This figure includes partial and full self-funders who pay for their own care which is provided by the local authority or independently.

Age UK is calling on the Government to use the Budget to invest in the social care system so it can deliver the care and support that older people need.

Age UK wants a care system where people can access the care they need and continues to campaign for a better social care system. To join the campaign or for more information, go to www.ageuk.org.uk/careincrisis or call 0800169 6565. Copies of a campaigns booklet ‘Care in Crisis: What’s next for social care?’ explains how the crisis in care affects individual and their families. It can also be ordered or downloaded from Age UK.

**Notes to Editors:**

1, ‘Care in Crisis 2014’ can be found at www.ageuk.org.uk

2, References below

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1 Health and Social Care Information Centre; Personal Social Services Expenditure and Unit Costs – England - http://www.hscic.gov.uk/searchcatalogue?productid=10667&topics=1%2fSocial+care%2fSocial+care+expenditure&sort=Relevance&size=10&page=1#top

