

Social Care Parliamentary Briefing

December 2017

Day to day tasks that many of us take for granted – like getting dressed, using the toilet, making a meal, or getting to the shops – can be almost impossible for many older people without help. Older people should be able to live well, not just survive, and future changes to the social care system can help enable them to live with dignity.

The current situation

There are a number of growing systematic issues in adult social care which need to be addressed at a national level. These are:

- **Underfunding** - There has now been a £160 million cut in total public spending in real terms in older people's social care in five years, during a period of rapidly rising demand because of our ageing population.
- **Unmet needs** – Our analysis shows there are now nearly 1.2 million people aged 65+ who don't receive the care support they need with essential daily living activities. This represents an 18% increase on last year; meaning that now nearly 1 in 8 of the entire older population now lives with some level of unmet need.
- **Declining access** – Cuts in local authority care services have placed increasing pressure on unpaid carers. There are now over 2 million carers aged 65 and over, 37% of these carers aged 80 and over are providing 20 hours or more of care a week, and 34% are providing 35 hours or more.
- **Regional variation** - Despite the 2014 Care Act introducing a national system of eligibility, the care sector is close to breaking point and there is local variation in supply that is leaving many people without the help that they desperately need.

Key organisations such as the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) have long said that the situation is unsustainable, and the Government now agrees. It is time to ensure that meaningful action is taken.

"If she didn't have her family to help her, where would she be? She hasn't even had a proper assessment and we have found we have a bill for £800 when we thought at least part of her care would have been funded by the council." Pat helps look after her mum Carmel aged 85.



The Social Care Green Paper

On 16 November 2017 the Government outlined their plans to launch a social care Green Paper by summer 2018 in a written ministerial statement. We welcome the announcement, in particular because Caroline Abrahams, Age UK Charity Director, has been asked to be an independent expert advisor.

The consultation is a welcome opportunity to address the flaws that exist within the social care system and to think about how we support people as they age. A meaningful consultation with a broad scope could lead to a sustainable solution that addresses unmet needs and enables vulnerable older people to live their later lives with the dignity they deserve.

At the same time however, the Government must still be prepared to provide additional emergency funding to help the system support growing demand until a sustainable solution is in place.

What we want to see

We want to see a meaningful and timely consultation which tackles the main problems in adult social care and sets about a sustainable way of delivering the care that older people desperately need. We think the consultation should:

- **Include a cost ‘cap’ as well as a ‘floor’** – knowing that your expenditure on care will be capped at a reasonable amount, as Sir Andrew Dilnot recommended, would be beneficial for many older people. It would provide reassurance to both older people and their families. It would also remove the unfairness where the condition someone has determines whether they pay huge care costs for their care
- **Factor in just how much older people are already paying under the current system** - funding proposals should be realistic and take into consideration that older people often already pay a lot for their care without necessarily getting a good service. Care shouldn't be funded by older people alone and if they are to pay even more, it must be clear how this will work in practice what they'll get in return
- **Be realistic about just how much or how little money older people actually have** - there are huge differences in income and wealth among older people, with 1.9 million pensioners now living below the poverty line. Many older people have faced disadvantages which have cumulated over their lifetime – and they rarely have a voice.
- **Create a fairer and more competitive market** - where care users have more choice and a greater range of options for their care. It's also a chance to address unfair parts of the system, like the experiences of self-funders and situations where older people or their families are pushed into paying additional and unreasonable 'top-up' fees for their care
- **Not include housing wealth when means testing care in someone's own home** - home care should be incentivised over residential care, as in line with Government policy. It is preventive and supports older people to sustain their independence. Alternatives could have enormous implications for older people's long term financial security and some could be put off getting home care when they really need it
- **Consider the role of unpaid carers and the value of their support** – they need more help and the consultation should be a chance to do more and ensure they receive the support they deserve
- **Be based on consultation with older people** – The consultation must take into account the views and experiences of older people to ensure that the real day to day issues they face are fixed. Older people should be consulted properly and the Government must consider how to consult harder to reach groups, like care users themselves and older people without internet access

The consultation is a key opportunity to think about what kind of society we want to live in and address the real fundamental flaws that exist within the system. We need to find a sustainable solution from a meaningful consultation period.

What can you do?

1. Raise the issue directly with the Secretary of State and Care Minister, informally or with a letter. We can help with drafting this if it would be useful.
2. Ask questions in Parliament; we can support you by drafting suggestions.
3. Find out what is going on locally and meet older care users in your constituency. We can put you in touch with your local Age UK who can help.

More information

If you have any questions or would like further information please contact James Farrar at james.farrar@ageuk.org.uk or 0203 033 1226.