



Social Care

Caring for our future

Shared ambitions
for care and support

On 15 September, the Government launched *Caring for our future: shared ambitions for care and support* – an engagement with people who use care and support services, carers, local councils, care providers, and the voluntary sector about the priorities for improving care and support.

Caring for our future is an opportunity to bring together the recommendations from the Law Commission and the Commission on Funding of Care and Support with the Government's *Vision for Adult Social Care*, and to discuss with stakeholders what the priorities for reform should be.

We now have an opportunity to get reform right. However, the Government recognises that we cannot make all the improvements to the care and support system at once. In this challenging economic environment, we need to weigh up what the priorities for reform are and determine a realistic way forward. The discussions we will have over the next three months will help us to shape those priorities.

This leaflet explains what the engagement is about, and how people can get involved.

What is care and support?

We care deeply about how we look after people who need help to live their lives, including older people and people whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.

We want everyone to have the help they need to live independent, active and healthy lives and to be part of the community. This could include help getting out of bed, cooking meals or getting out

of the house – the day-to-day activities many of us take for granted but that some people find more difficult. It might include emotional support at times of difficulty or stress. This help is what we call care and support.

Care and support is something that affects us all – we all know someone, a family member or friend, who needs additional care or support to lead full and active lives. It might be because they are getting older, have developed an illness or disability, or have lived with a disability from birth. In fact, most of us will need care and support at some point in our lives.

Care and support is provided by a wide range of people and organisations. People might have friends or family members that help them, they might get support from a personal assistant, or they may choose to live in a care home.

Today, some people can get help from the state to pay for their care and support costs. Disability benefits provide a basic level of support to everyone who has a care and support need, regardless of their income or wealth. The state provides additional support through the social care system for people on low incomes who cannot afford to pay for themselves if their local council decides that they need help.

Why do we need to change the care and support system?

We know that care and support in this country needs to change. People tell us that the current system is unfair, confusing and unpopular, and it lets down the people who need it most, often when they are most vulnerable or stressed.

There are many reasons why things have to change.

Society is changing, and we need to ensure the system is sustainable for the long term.

Within 20 years, the number of over 85s will double, and the number of people living with life-long disabilities is likely to grow too. At the same time, though, there will be relatively fewer people working and paying taxes to help pay for the support the Government provides. As a society, we should celebrate the fact that people are living longer. However, it means that if we don't spend more on care and support, fewer people will have financial help from the Government. More people, and their families, will struggle on their own to meet the costs of care.

People want greater choice and control over their care and support.

We know everyone's circumstances and ambitions are different. But, too often, people have had to make do with one-size-fits-all care and support services. We need to put power into people's hands by giving them a budget to pay for their care, better information and advice, and ensuring there is a wide range of organisations providing care from which to choose.

People's expectations are rising. As a country we expect better standards of care, and more control over our own lives. People need to be protected

from poor care, to have the support to choose the care that best meets their needs and to be able to speak out if there are problems. And to deliver better care we need to make sure the care workforce has the right skills.

Care is expensive, and people often face very high care costs without being able to protect themselves. None of us know if we will need care in the future or how much it might cost. The state already provides some support through the social care system, which is targeted at people on low incomes. Academics have said that today's 65 year olds will, over the rest of their lifetimes, face an average cost of £32,000 – but one in five will need care costing less than £1,000, and one in five will need care costing more than £50,000. The current system for getting state support is confusing, making it difficult for people to plan financially for their future needs. And unlike other areas of life – your home, your car, your mobile phone – there is little opportunity for people to protect themselves from high costs if the worst happens. People have to use up their savings and, if they need to move into a care home, they do not get any financial support towards the cost of their care until they have also used all their housing wealth down to the last £23,250.

What has the Government done already?

We have already shown our commitment to change by taking major steps forward towards an improved care and support system.

Last November the Government published its *Vision for Adult Social Care*. The vision set out the principles for a modern system of care and support. It said we want to see a care and support where care is personalised, people have choice

in how their needs and ambitions are met, and carers are supported. Active, strong communities should help people maintain their independence. We want high quality care to be delivered by a diverse range of providers and a skilled workforce that can provide care and support with compassion and imagination. People must be confident that they are protected against poor standards and abuse.

We have set out our priorities for helping carers in the next steps for the *Carers' Strategy*. We have announced extra funding for care and support, to help to protect the care and support system from the difficult spending decisions that the Government has needed to take to bring the country's finances under control and to reduce the deficit.

We also asked the Commission on the Funding of Care and Support to look at options for reforming how people should pay for care and support.

What is the engagement process about?

Over the next three months, we will be seeking the views of people who use care and support services, carers, local councils, care providers, and the voluntary sector about how we improve the care and support system, and what the priorities for change are.

In recent months, two independent Commissions have sent reports to Government on two different aspects of care and support. In May, the Law Commission published recommendations for simplifying social care law, and in July the Commission on Funding of Care and Support published recommendations for reforming the way that people pay for care and support.

These recommendations will form the basis for our discussions.

Law Commission: The Law Commission report said that adult social care law is outdated and confusing, making it difficult for people who need care and support, their carers and local authorities to know what they are entitled to. It recommended bringing together all the different elements of social care law into a single, modern, adult social care statute.

Commission on Funding of Care and Support: The Commission on the Funding of Care and Support recommended that the amount that people have to spend on care over their lifetimes should be capped, although people in care homes should continue to pay a contribution towards their living costs. The Commission also recommended that the current system of means-tested support should be extended, so that more people can get additional help in paying for care.

We have also received a report from the Palliative Care Funding Review, which sets out how we could create a fair and transparent funding system that ensures integrated, responsive, high quality health and care services for those at the end of life.

All these reports contain some important and valuable proposals to help us decide our approach to changing the care and support system. The Government has a broad agenda for reform of care and support. These reports were never intended to look at all our priorities. For the White Paper on social care reform and the progress report on funding reform that we will publish next spring, we have an opportunity to get reform right so we want to have a wider discussion about every aspect of the system to help us decide what to do.

We have already said that we want to see a care and support system where care is personalised, where people have choice in how their needs and ambitions are met and where carers are supported. We want high quality care to be delivered by a diverse range of providers and a skilled workforce that can provide care and support with compassion and imagination. People must be confident that they are protected against poor standards and abuse.

Making changes to the care and support system is not simple. The challenges of an aging society are being faced by most developed countries. There are no easy answers, and we can't make all the changes at once. We know that, as a country, we will need to spend more on care and support as our society ages. In this challenging economic environment, we need to weigh up what the priorities for reform are and produce a realistic roadmap for change.

So, over the next three months, we will be engaging with a range of people and organisations involved with care and support. We will be talking about the future of a service that, while it is invisible to most people, can make a profound difference to the day-to-day lives of millions of people in this country.

How will the engagement exercise work?

We want to discuss what people's priorities for change are, and this will feed directly into our White Paper, and the progress report on funding reform, in the spring.

We have identified six areas where we believe there is the biggest potential to make improvements to the care and support system.

These are:

Quality: how could we improve the quality of care and how could we develop the future workforce to do this?

Personalisation: how could we give people more choice and control over the care and support they use, and help them to make informed decisions?

Shaping local care services: how could we ensure there is a wide range of organisations that provide innovative and responsive care services and that respond to people's needs and choices?

Prevention: how could we support more effective prevention and early intervention to keep people independent and in good health for as long as possible?

Integration (in partnership with the NHS Future Forum): how could we build better connections locally between the NHS and other care services?

The role of the financial services: what role could the financial services sector play in supporting care users, carers and their families?

Making changes to the funding system for care and support, as discussed in the Commission on Funding of Care and Support's report, would impact on all aspects of the care and support system. So we also want to consider the implications of the Commission's recommendations as part of these discussions.

We have asked a key leader from the care and support community to help the Government to lead the discussions for each of these six areas. We want to work collaboratively, drawing upon the networks of expertise and experience that have developed over many years. So, together, we will be attending events, holding meetings, listening to the views of user organisations, carers' representatives, care providers, and local councils

on what the priorities for improving care and support should be.

As part of *Caring for our future*, we also want to hear people's views on the recommendations made by the Commission on Funding of Care and Support and how we should assess these proposals, including in relation to other potential priorities for improvement. The Commission's recommendations present a range of options, including on the level of a cap and the contribution that people make to living costs in residential care, which could help us to manage the system and its costs. We want to hear people's views on these different options, and the trade-offs involved. Later in the autumn, as part of the engagement, we will ask the six discussion leaders to bring together the views they have gathered on support for the Commission's proposals, and the wider priorities for change.

As we said in our response to the Commission on Funding of Care and Support, we face difficult economic times. Given this, the Government will have to weigh up different funding priorities and calls on its constrained resources carefully before deciding how to act.

These discussions over the next three months will help us decide how to move forward over the months and years ahead to improve the care and support system.

How you can tell us what you think

- Organisations involved in care and support can take part in events and meetings attended by the discussion leaders.
- Send your views to your local or national representative group and ask them to take part in the engagement.

- Complete the feedback form (available at www.caringforourfuture.dh.gov.uk) and return it by email to caringforourfuture@dh.gsi.gov.uk or by post to: Caring for our future, Area 117, Wellington House, 133–155 Waterloo Road, London, SE1 8UG.
- Post your comments directly onto the *Caring for our future* website, or email or post them to the addresses above.

What happens next?

The engagement will run until early December, but we are asking for written comments as early as possible in order to inform discussions. The deadline for written comments is 2 December.

At the end of the engagement, the discussion leaders will bring together views about the priorities for change. This will help the Government decide what to do.

The Government will publish a White Paper in spring 2012, alongside a progress report on funding reform. The White Paper will set out our approach to reform, to start the process of transforming our care and support system.



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