

Information about the work of the Commission on Funding of Care and Support

Why was the Commission on Funding of Care and Support set up?

Thanks to better lifestyles and improvements in health care, people are now living much longer than in previous generations. This is something to be celebrated, but it does mean more people need care and support, and they often need it for longer periods of time.

The Government is thinking about how the increasing number of people needing care and support should be looked after, and how the services that they need should be paid for. This is why, in July this year, the Government set up this independent Commission. The Government has asked us to make recommendations for all adults in England, by July 2011.

What is care and support?

By care and support, we mean all the things which help people stay active and independent, lead fulfilling lives, and build meaningful relationships. Care and support helps people do the everyday things that most of us take for granted like getting out of bed, dressed and into work and being able to see our families and friends. Some support comes from government, but families and communities play an equally valuable role.

Why does the system for care and support need reforming?

The current social care system is a means-tested system, which means that only those with high levels of need and low ability to pay for themselves qualify for support from the Government. This means many people have to pay for their social care themselves and rely heavily on family and friends for support. Many of those who have to go into a care home need to sell their homes to pay for their care. This can be seen as unfair

At the moment, people don't really understand how the social care system works and think that it will all be free when they need it – like the NHS. The system is also complicated to use, and the services don't always work very well together.

We also know that people are living much longer than before. This means the pressures on the system are going to increase. For example, over the next 20 years the number of people over 90 years of age is expected to nearly treble and the number of people with learning disabilities is expected to increase by 30%.

What is the Commission going to do?

Our job is to recommend to the Government how best, as a society, we pay for care and support in the future. This is not easy, as it means we need to look at all the different ways in which people support themselves and are supported by the state, including the adult social care system, disability benefits, housing support, health care and prevention services.

We want to create a care and support system which as far as possible is:

- Built for the long term
- Fair to everyone
- Offering people choice
- Good value for money
- Easy to use and understand

We also want to make sure that the new system promotes the well-being of individuals and families, and that it recognizes the valuable contributions of everyone involved in care and support, including individuals, carers, families, professionals, and volunteers.

Our work will involve making some tough decisions. This is why we are asking a wide range of people, including experts and representatives of organisations that work with older people, carers or disabled people, to help us directly with our work.

We are also looking at what the public and those using services have already told the Government about care and support; and we will be doing more work in the New Year to understand different people's views.

Keeping in touch with the Commission

If you want to find out more, see: <http://dilnotcommission.dh.gov.uk/>

If you have any comments or suggestions you would like to make to the Commission, email us at: dilnotcomments@dh.gsi.gov.uk