

Fairer Care Funding – The Dilnot Commission’s Report on Social Care

The latest Commission on the future funding of social care and support presented its findings to the Government on July 4th 2011.

The independent commission set up a year ago by the Government was asked to recommend a fair and sustainable funding system for Adult Social Care in England. There is no doubt that reform is needed urgently to support people using care services currently. As VSNW says ‘*the key test to the Government’s response is whether it will commit to publish a White Paper by Easter, including details on how the new proposals will be funded.*’

‘After years of under-investment in the care and support system, the growing challenge of an ageing population, and recent cuts in local authority budgets, the care system is struggling to deliver the services that older people need.’
Age UK Campaigns Newsletters

The key messages and recommendations from the report are:

- **To share the costs of care between the individual and the State by introducing a social insurance model.**
- To introduce a nationwide system with a national framework for assessments and eligibility, and a degree of portability between different LA areas.

Instead of FACS there would be a single national threshold. If you moved to a different area you would take your entitlement with you. The Commission also recommends that until the current assessment process is replaced the threshold should, at minimum, be set at Substantial (*The Law Commission proposed that it be set at low level targeted support*)

- The means test threshold for residential care should be raised to £100,000.

As with today's system, this will include the value of your home if you own your own property, and other assets. The present threshold is £23,250.

- A £35,000 cap on the individuals' contribution to their care costs, in their lifetime.

After the cap is reached individuals would be eligible to full state support.

On average, this means that individuals would have to spend no more than 30% of their assets on paying for care – compared to 90% for some people at the moment (*ref: Community Care July 21*) After someone has self-funded up to the threshold they would be entitled to state funding.

- Free care for those who require needs before they turn 40yrs. All those who enter adulthood with care and support needs should be eligible for free state support immediately rather than being subjected to a means test.
- Payment towards care for older people (capped at £35,000) would be met by insurance schemes, encouragement to save, or through Equity Release schemes.

Comments from MACC:

MACC has had a longstanding interest in long –term care, from our contributions to the Royal Commission in 1997 to the publication of our resource pack in 2003, to the inexhaustible campaigning of the Manchester Older Peoples Network since 1999.

We recognise that the current social care system is under-funded, unfair and unsustainable and has not kept pace with demographic changes. The latest findings by a Commission are welcomed if the Government is going to act quickly in their response. There will now be further consultation on the Commission's recommendations, together with the Law Commission's report on modernising Social Care Law.

MACC intends to organise debates of our own on the recommendations to ensure that the views of the VCS in Manchester and other stakeholder groups are heard.

Some areas that need to be considered further and questions that need to be raised include:

- We would support the idea of eligibility criteria being set at a national level , to do away with the post-code lottery of care, but would support the Law Commission's recommendation that this level be set at Low-level if we are to save on care costs in the future.

- We would also welcome the introduction of a cap on total personal expenditure on social care, but would still argue that the artificial distinction between nursing and personal care should be resolved once and for all! The Commission strongly supports the Law Commission's recommendation to put NHS continuing health care on a stronger statutory footing.
- We would also continue to argue that the care of people should not be dictated to by 'market forces' (Southern Cross is not the only provider about to go bust)
- We would also welcome the proposal to improve information and advice about social care (and health care) funding and services available and that there needs to be a duty on Local Authorities to provide (commission) these services, but we would add advocacy to the list of services if we are to work towards equality of access. There should be a strategy for developing local advocacy services that is resourced nationally.
- Prevention and the promotion of well-being should be further up the agenda, backed by planning and investment. The reforms point us in the right direction but Public and Voluntary services and some welfare benefits have been drastically cut. Funding prevention and early intervention support for people that, as we know, will save costs in the long term.

Questions we would want to address:

Will Councils still be able to set their own charges for home care support?

Will the overall cap on social care spending cover payments for care at home?

Will there be a different financial mechanism for paying for social care for adults between 40yrs and 65yrs?

Refs: *Guardian, Unison, Age UK, The Kings Fund Briefing, Voluntary Sector North West.*

<http://www.dilnotcommission.dh.gov.uk/2011/07/04/commission-report/>