

THE BIG CARE DEBATE

Discussion attended by over 100 carers and professionals, (approx 65% carers) at the Worcestershire Association of Carers AGM in Worcester on 16th October 2009

National Care Service

Is there anything missing?

Carers are not identified in the objectives of the paper. There is a significant absence of recognition of the contribution carers make to the provision of care in the community; no acknowledgement of their individual needs and their own consequent health issues, nor of the financial losses carers incur through their caring role.

There is no recognition of the different needs of people: of different ages; conditions and disabilities; where a carer cares for more than one person. The Green Paper appears to focus on older people to the detriment of others.

National eligibility criteria of need

There was an overall acceptance of the principle of national criteria to avoid post-code lottery and which could be transferable. However, who would determine the national level of resource allocations? Who would monitor the scheme? There was concern that national criteria would not take into account local variations, in particular the issues facing rural carers eg extra time needed for to compensate for additional travel times; recruitment issues in isolated areas. Allowing for the varied needs of the user could also present a challenge.

A good idea:- there should be a Carers Ombudsman for appeals.

Assessments

Assessments were critical to service delivery. There was concern over the quality of assessments; the training of staff carrying out assessments; poor differentiation between the needs of the carer and the cared-for. It was essential that there was an effective structure for requesting an assessment and for a review.

Making the vision a reality

Joined-up working and service delivery was essential. This would require better staff training and better communication across organisations. GPs would also need to be more aware of carers' needs.

A linked up assessment process would avoid repetition and speed up delivery,. However, there was a risk of too much signposting and of no-one being accountable and a loss of responsibility. There could be issues of data protection across sectors, which could be used negatively. Carers needed to battle to get services and they were not always able to stand up for themselves.

There was also concern that as many service delivery organisations were "profit making", there was a risk of poor service delivery eg not fulfilling their 'full hour'.

How to pay for care

Although it was felt that there was not enough detail for an effective consideration of the proposals, there was most support for the "Comprehensive Scheme". There was apprehension about insurance companies being involved, given their ambivalent attitude to disability and care needs. It was felt that the National Insurance scheme which already existed should be extended, but ring-fenced to cover care needs. There was anxiety about the ability to pay a lump sum on retirement; the cut off point between those able to receive free care and those just above the threshold. The scheme was a disincentive to save, as people might spend savings more quickly in order to get below the threshold.

The loss of Carers Allowance at pension age continued to anger, many as well as the low rate of the benefit.

Good suggestions: An ID card for carers; a certificate recognising skills and experience gained through caring.

Please Turn Over