

Yesterday, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers' CEO, Carole Cochrane, attended the launch of the first annual report from the social care and health regulator, Care Quality Commission (CQC): *The state of health care and adult social care A look at the quality of care in England in 2009*. This report gives a snapshot of health and social care for adults in England. The summary booklet is very readable and is at: <http://www.cqc.org.uk/stateofcare.cfm> along with the full text. Here are some key messages relevant to Carers' Centres:

Things are getting generally better:

Health care and social care in England continued to improve in 2009. A small minority of services were failing to meet basic standards of quality and safety. CQC wants to see far less variation in quality, particularly in the areas of safety, safeguarding of people using services, and training and development of staff. Care organisations need to get better at learning from mistakes and near misses.

Advocacy services should be increased:

"If a person wants support with making choices about their care or expressing their views, they should be able to use a free advocacy service."

Develop the universal offer of information and advice:

"The councils we assessed as excellent made sure that if people were not eligible for funded care, they were given good information and support about alternatives."

Reduce health inequalities:

"The councils that we assessed to have performed excellently were reducing inequalities in local people's health and offering good advice services. Various approaches were being used to make it easier for people to get advice and make them aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Examples included ... coffee mornings that offered free health checks and advice on managing long-term conditions, DVDs for people with learning disabilities and 'information prescriptions'."

Involve people in shaping their local services:

"All organisations that provide publicly funded health care or social care have a legal duty to make sure that local people are able to shape these services. People must have the opportunity to influence how services are developed and delivered, and to feed back their experiences of using them."

Join up care pathways:

Carer quote: "It takes a while to find out where to go. I had to ask too many different people for advice. It was too disjointed. There needs to be a 'one-stop-shop' for all advice".

Keep developing intermediate care:

Intermediate care includes rehabilitation services for people who need support to manage at home after being discharged from hospital and help for older people to live independently or in sheltered housing, instead of residential care. "The number of people receiving intermediate care funded by their councils has almost doubled since 2004." Carer quote: "Because I knew that I would be supported by the nurses and doctors as well as by the care workers, I was fairly confident about having May at home [rather than at hospital]...it has been a lot easier dealing with one team."

Possible business opportunities for Carers' Centres suggested by the message above:

- intermediate care and reablement services – could you help such services to help carers during and after the reablement period, thus improving outcomes for carers and those for whom they care?
- Carers' Centres need to be part of every area's universal offer of advice and information and Centres should be recognised as providers of advocacy for carers..
- Involving carers in decision making should be something in which councils and PCTs are interested.
- Carers' Centres can help reduce health inequalities experienced by carers.

CQC are also consulting on their proposals for assessing quality in 2010-11 and beyond. The development of their predecessor's "Outcome and Performance Characteristics" assessment guide substantially included carers for the first time – we hope to influence CQC to emulate that approach and extend it into the NHS. Q8 of the consultation asks: "Which of our proposed topics for special reviews and studies do you consider to be the highest priority?" There are a number of questions relevant to carers, but if you have time for nothing else, please email [assessmentconsult@cqc.org.uk](mailto:assessmentconsult@cqc.org.uk) to respond to Q8, indicating that you wish them to prioritise the proposed special review on "Carers and hospital discharge". The full documents are at: [www.cqc.org.uk/getinvolved/consultations/assessmentsofquality.cfm](http://www.cqc.org.uk/getinvolved/consultations/assessmentsofquality.cfm)