

Panel Session Three: Social Care Green Paper

Briefing note

In the 2007 Pre-Budget Report and Comprehensive Spending Review the Government committed to a “radical rethink” on long-term care. On 12 May the Prime Minister launched a six month period of national debate on “Why England needs a new care and support system”. This six-month “pre-consultation” period will lead to the development of a Green Paper in early 2009 focusing on how to best fund adult social care and support in the future.

In light of the personalisation agenda and the joining up of local services the LGA believes that traditional perceptions of “social care” are outdated. As we all rely on a whole range of public services to support our daily lives, we need to broaden our perception of what an individual may need to support them in everyday living. This could include support with income and employment, transport, housing, training and education, and leisure to name a few.

Since announcing the Green Paper in the November Budget the Government has given very little of its own views as to the future model of funding social care, although it has acknowledged that the current funding system is not working. There is therefore recognition within Government that a sustainable system of financing social care and support in the future will likely need additional state funding: where that money will come from is not clear. Non-means-tested benefits and a degree of transfer from NHS budgets are the only two options which would likely provide the size of increased funding needed to meet future demand.

The LGA is calling for a system of care and support based on a universal element of funding derived from non-means tested benefits. This would include relatively few eligibility thresholds and only one assessment of a person’s financial contribution.

Councils would continue to ensure the availability not only of brokerage and advice services for everyone, but also the availability and quality of services which local people identify as important to them. This would include ongoing support and advocacy for local people who were using their own funding to purchase these services, with the council acting on behalf of the community to ensure quality services.

The system should be accessible through any part of the wider network of services that an individual may access, such as an individual's GP, or pharmacist, or be automatically distributed with concessionary travel passes.

Since the inadequacies of the current system are already well documented it is more pertinent at this time to discuss the trade-offs and potential barriers to any future system.

Proposed questions for discussion are as follows:

- What do we need to do to make the vision of independence, choice and control a reality?
- What should be the balance of responsibility between the individual, the family and the Government?
- Should the system be the same for everybody or should we be varying the way we allocate public funding according to certain principles?
 - Should there be one system for everyone or different systems depending on the type of need?
 - How should we balance local flexibility against national consistency?
 - What should be the balance between targeting public resources on those least able to pay and having a system that supports those who plan and save?