

Social Care Green Paper Debate

29 October 2009

Key Messages

- Councils do everything possible to ensure vulnerable members of our society get the services they need, but the LGA agrees that **insufficient funding, growing demand and escalating costs mean the current system is not fit for purpose.**
- The LGA recognises that there is both real and perceived unfairness in the current system. We support a nationally consistent system of assessment with a central commitment for the state to pay an agreed minimum of each individual's care package. This **national entitlement must sit alongside local decisions on what services should be in place to meet local individual need, the amount available to pay for them, and how they will be delivered.**
- The LGA would **oppose any attempt to 'nationalise' the care service.** A national entitlement would be enhanced by councils retaining local flexibility in commissioning personalised service design and linking up with health, housing, transport and leisure locally. This would be best described as a national care and support offer or guarantee (rather than service).
- It is clear that more money will be needed for care and support in the future. The LGA welcomes the debate on how to achieve this. This should include **consideration of how the totality of health and social care funding is used.** In the last decade funding for health has increased in real terms by more than six times the increase in funding to local government to deliver services like social care.
- The LGA **strongly opposes a fully national funding system.** The Green Paper rightly recognises such a model would make it difficult for councils to tailor care packages to individuals' needs and would significantly lessen councils' control of costs.

LGA Contact

For more information, please contact Nathan Stower, Senior Public Affairs Officer, nathan.stower@lga.gov.uk, 0207 664 3226. The LGA's proposals for a reformed system are available at <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/2001605>.

briefing

Current System

There has been continued improvement and many varied achievements within the current adult social care system. For example, 87% of councils were rated either 'excellent' or 'good' in the final round of inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (now Care Quality Commission).

Despite the successes, the system is not fit for the future. We identify three key problems:

- **unclear** – the responsibilities of individuals, local and central government are not understood. The eligibility system and assessments of need and means combined with different charging regimes for different services often leaves people perplexed. Confusion around the boundary between health and social care only exacerbates the problem.
- **underfunded** - funding is not keeping pace with demand for services. In May 2008 Alan Johnson spoke of a £6bn funding 'gap' within the next twenty years for older people's social care alone.
- **unfair** – because of funding pressures nearly three-quarters of councils are forced to set their eligibility threshold to offer services only at 'critical' or 'substantial' level need. Local variation in what services are available is a source of frustration for users and their families.

LGA Proposals for Reform

In June, the LGA published *A fairer future*¹, which sets out proposals for a reformed system of adult social care and support, including:

- **a minimum level of support available to all** – including information, advice and advocacy; benefits support; adaptations and equipment; and reablement and technology;
- **a single, transferable assessment of needs and means recognised in every part of the country** with services and funding decisions to meet those needs decided locally with the individual to reflect personal preferences and local resources; and
- **a realistic and sustainable funding solution** that considers how best to align all resources, including NHS spend.

Care and Support Green Paper

The main proposals in the Government's Social Care Green Paper are:

- A new National Care Service with a universal offer for care and support that is understandable to everyone, supports people to stay independent, and provides services based on individuals' circumstances and need. Key features include:
 - a standardised national needs assessment;
 - a nationally set level of need at which people qualify for care and support; and
 - a set minimum portion of care to be funded by the state e.g. 1/3 or 1/4

¹ *A Fairer Future* available at <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/2001605>.

- Recognition of the need to increase available funding, with three preferred models:
 - Partnership: A guaranteed minimum of every individual's care costs paid for by the State (regardless of the individual's income), with the remainder of costs being met by the individual (subject to their means); or
 - Insurance: An extension of the partnership model with the option of additional care costs covered through insurance; or
 - Comprehensive: The requirement for everyone over retirement age to pay into a state insurance scheme.
- Two options for deciding how much an individual should receive to spend on care and support:
 - Part national/Part local – local authorities responsible for deciding how much an individual should receive to spend on care and support; or
 - Fully national – government would decide how much funding an individual should receive. This could be consistent nationally or vary across the country, based on nationally agreed amounts.
- Renewed focus on joining up social care, health, housing and other systems to provide seamless services that deliver better outcomes.
- An expectation that councils will play a key role in helping to develop the local market for care and support services.

LGA Views

National/Local

The LGA recognises that there is real and perceived unfairness in the current system. We would support a nationally consistent system of assessment with a central commitment for the state to pay an agreed minimum of each individual's care package **to sit alongside local decisions on what services should be in place to meet need, the amount to pay for them, and how they will be delivered.** We think this would best be described as a national care and support guarantee (rather than service) locally expressed.

We would oppose any attempt to 'nationalise' the care service. We believe personalisation can best be delivered by councils retaining local flexibility in commissioning personalised service design and linking up with health, housing, transport and leisure locally. The local offer is a delicate balance of people's own resources, community support, the love and good will of carers and the contribution of a wide range of local services

A prerequisite for the national care and support offer, and for personalisation, is the right local offer. Councils are working closely with the NHS to develop prevention and reablement services. Behind these a complex pattern of family, neighbourhood and community support is needed. Those using personal budgets are looking for flexible, local solutions that dip in and out of formal care and support services. Good housing, transport, leisure and community safety are integral.

Funding

We agree there is a need for society to pay more for care and support in the future and welcome the debate on how to do this. This is particularly important after a decade that has seen funding for health increase in real terms by more than six times the increase in funding to local government to deliver services like social care.

Local government already contributes a significant amount to total local adult social care expenditure through Council Tax. We estimate that local government contributes 39%, or more than £5.3bn to total adult care spend of over £13bn. In some areas councils fund more than 80% of their adult care expenditure through Council Tax.

We strongly oppose a fully national funding system. The Green Paper recognises such a model would make it difficult for councils to tailor care packages to individuals' needs and would significantly lessen councils' control of costs. A fully national system would have to be fully funded through national taxation, which would mean a transfer of funding out of the local government finance system. This would involve enormous amounts of money and could jeopardise the huge range of other invaluable services councils commission and provide for their local communities.

The Secretary of State has clarified the position on Disability Living Allowance. The LGA has previously highlighted the possible benefits of bringing Attendance Allowance into personal budgets, while recognising the need to protect existing entitlements.

What's missing?

The Green Paper is focused on those with high levels of need for care and support and particularly older people. Next step proposals need to cover more explicitly all adults and how the national care offer will dovetail with the broader range of services that support active citizenship, independence, choice and control locally.