

## **Sunderland City Council: Health, Housing and Adult Services - Adult Social Care Partnership Board**

### **Response to the national debate on 'The case for change – why England needs a new care and support system**

#### **1. What more do we need to do to make our vision of independence, choice and control a reality?**

In order to make this vision a reality, health care services, particularly services such as continuing health care, need to be discussed as part of the debate. Often these services are seen as a 'grey area' and clarity about who is responsible for what and who is expected to pay for what is needed.

Extra resources will be required to enable the vision to be achieved. This includes investing into mainstream services to ensure that older or disabled people can access services provided at leisure centres, for example, by ensuring that equipment such as hoists are available and that the workforce can be responsive to people's needs.

Information will be key to achieving the vision; informing the public about what is available so that they can make an informed choice about the services they can access. We need to encourage people to use universal services and to think creatively about the types of support that would meet their needs, in order to shift their thinking away from traditional care services and also to raise their expectations of services.

Key to supporting choice and control will be the provision of independent advocacy, particularly for people who lack capacity and a simplified process for individuals to manage their direct payments/personal budgets.

#### **2. What should the balance of responsibility be between the family, the individual and the Government?**

We believe that it should be a shared responsibility between the family, the individual and the government.

The family: if government expect the family to take some responsibility to provide care, then carers need to be better supported, for example, supporting them to remain in employment or increasing the amount of carers allowance they receive. Independence, choice and control needs to be for the carer as well as the individual.

The individual: individuals need to be better informed about their responsibilities and the expectations that may be placed upon them to support themselves. Better information at a very early stage is key to ensuring that individuals can make informed choices about the types of care and support they may need in the future and what they may need to fund themselves. If the new care and support system is transparent, then individuals will be aware of their responsibilities. Some individuals are unable to save for later life, however they do pay tax and national insurance, therefore a suggestion may be to ring fence individuals' tax and NI contributions to

pay for their social care needs in later life. Many people who pay into the system during working life and who may also save, have real concerns that they will then be penalised through taxation and charges in order to pay for their care in later life and that their property will be taken into account. It is common for people who do try to save for later life to be of the opinion that those who have paid nothing into the system receive free treatment, whereas those who have saved are penalised for planning for later life.

The government: government have a responsibility to support those who are unable to provide for themselves and those younger people who may not have had the opportunity to plan to support themselves. Government also needs to provide better information to individuals about their responsibilities and what may be expected of them.

**3. Should the system be the same for everybody or should we consider varying the ways we allocate government funding according to certain principles?**

**a. Should there be one system for everyone or different systems depending on the type of need for care and support that somebody has?**

We agree that there needs to be one system for everyone that is fair and equitable, however there may need to be some variation between those people who have become disabled at a younger age or who have been born with disabilities and those people who have more predictable care needs in later life. People who have become disabled at a younger age may not have had an opportunity to accept individual responsibility or plan financially, therefore the balance of responsibility for a younger person would be less than that of an older person.

**b. Which is more important to us, local flexibility or national consistency?**

Both national consistency and local flexibility are important. There needs to be national minimum standards which would ensure some level of consistency nationally, but also local flexibility, which is essential, to enable local innovation and local issues to be addressed.

**c. What should the balance be between targeting government resources at those who are least able to pay and having a system that supports those who plan and save?**

Whatever care and support system is developed there will need to be a 'safety net' or a national minimum standard for those people who cannot provide for themselves and for those who can, the minimum standard service could be topped up with additional services that people pay for. People who have planned and saved for later life should not be penalised, therefore the new system may need to consider an income disregard threshold to protect these people. The means testing system should be based on people's disposable income or how much money they have in the bank as opposed to

whether they have any assets as many people fear they will be forced to sell their home to pay for their care.

Many people no longer plan 'for a rainy day' therefore people need to be encouraged to plan and save for later life, this requires a cultural change.

Many carers are forced to give up work or have been unable to work due to caring responsibilities, therefore this reduces their earnings power and thus means it is more difficult for them to save for the future.