

Paying for Care in Wales: creating a fair sustainable system

February 2009

Northgate Public Services Response

Response

Introduction

1. Northgate warmly welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation by the Welsh Assembly Government prior to a green paper.
2. Northgate's response is based on our long track record of working within public services, delivering services which place the need of the citizens at their heart.
3. We have been working with councils for over twenty five years to develop and modernise social care services as part of the process of transforming services to create citizen-centred services.
4. Our response focuses on the general comments raised by the consultation where we believe our experience or expertise gives us insight into possible solutions.
5. It is premised on the basis that all solutions should be based on quality outcomes which contribute to the effective well being and welfare of people based on them being provided with more accessible, personalised care at early stages of needs and helping adults to maintain independence and all individuals to maintain autonomy.

Comment

6. The provision of adequate social care which matches the needs of individuals for personalised care and meets the challenges posed by an aging population and a diminishing tax base, is one of the most pressing issues of our time.
7. The current economic climate presents an exceptional and additional challenge. It requires all those involved in the provision of care to respond and to innovate to support public services excellence and to raise the standards of universal care by reaching out to those most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our communities.
8. To build a sustainable health and social care system which places the diverse needs of citizens at its heart, and matches increasing demand, requires honest debate and innovative partnerships which can pursue new ways of working capable of delivering substantial change.
9. We therefore warmly welcome the publication of the Welsh Assembly Government consultation paper which clearly explains the challenges faced by Wales.
10. The publication last year of *Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities* commenced the process of the detailed review of care and support services in Wales.
11. We wholeheartedly agree with the emphasis on the need for services that actively prevent the loss of independence and are efficiently delivered to the same high standards throughout Wales.

12. Effective and efficient care and support services promote inclusion and focus on citizen outcomes. They are accessible, accountable and anticipate the needs of their citizens for care at the right time, in the right way, and with respect for the individual at the heart of service provision.
13. We therefore support the Welsh Assembly Government in promoting an approach which is firmly rooted in the social model of disability and which promotes rights, equality and choice for all disabled people.
14. The need for change is readily identified in the consultation, not least the fact that individuals have the right to expect high degrees of service quality.
15. The document highlights the particular challenges facing Wales which has the highest levels of permanent sickness and disability in the economically active population, the highest levels of people with limiting long-term illness and a higher proportion of carers than any of the English regions.
16. These challenges must be met by care and support services which focus on performance outcomes and continuous improvement through strategies including:
 - focusing on the needs of individuals
 - innovative commissioning which enables the development of new models for the delivery of social care
 - partnership working with the public sector and across the not-for-profit and private sector
 - building up the skills and capacity of public services.
17. Delivering adequate social care requires adequate funding which ensures that when individuals need care, they are able to secure high quality care. We welcome the fundamental review of funding requirements and the fact that the outcomes of this consultation on paying for care will feed into it.
18. The charging regime for home care in Wales is clearly inequitable and unfair. The charges that are levied vary for the same service across Wales. We are pleased that the Assembly Government has pledged to introduce new legislation to address this issue by creating a more consistent and fairer approach to charging levels across Wales.
19. Whilst the consultation rules out the possibility of providing for Free Personal Care as it states that it could not be afforded, it welcomes any views on this issue. We fear that this begs the question as to why in the UK, it can be afforded in some countries and not in others. It is arguable that an equitable system should provide parity across the UK. On the other hand, devolved powers mean that different countries within the UK can develop diverse policies.
20. In constructing a long term debate on care and support in Wales, we believe that it is important that the issue of why free care and support is provided in part of the UK and cannot be afforded in others should be addressed head on by the Assembly Government. This is integral to building public trust and to build up individual support in accepting responsibility for paying towards care.

21. We accept that building consensus about the future funding of care and support is one of the main challenges of our time. We believe that the debate will be enhanced by consideration of the wider issues relating to Wales and the UK, particularly as green papers will be published for both Wales and England in 2009 and the fact that this consultation runs parallel to the one in England.
22. We are of the view that any solution to funding and who pays must adopt a radical rather than a piecemeal approach as the challenges facing our society and economy are too great for any other way to be warranted.
23. We support the introduction of a more personalised care system. Within that context we believe in nationally set standards delivered by locally led services in tune with the localities and meeting minimum standards of quality care and support.
24. Equity demands that people on low incomes and with lower assets are able to access high quality services and that services built around the needs of individuals cater for their diverse needs.
25. Any analysis of who pays for care must ensure that there is a suitable supply of efficient and effective care and support services and that these are monitored and controlled effectively. This is particularly the case, given the trend towards personalisation and individualised budgets.
26. We believe that there are enormous opportunities to develop new models of working to strengthen and support care and support services in enhancing commissioning and in managing the demand for more personalised services. This requires the effective management of information and the use of technology to drive through social care and support delivery. It also requires an innovative approach to developing new partnerships and joint ways of working across the public sector and between the public sector and the not-for-profit and private sectors.
27. New relationships need to be forged which help to strengthen and support public services and assist them to build capacity and capability, and to create sustainable solutions, to transform services and to promote rapid change. For example, we are increasingly working with local authorities in performance partnerships which are helping to promote effective social care services, driving through efficiencies as well as building up the skills and capacities of public servants, leaving sustainable solutions built for the long term, once the partnership has ended. These are new risk free models where performance is linked to fees and cashable savings.
28. Every one of us faces the fact that we may need care and support at some time in our lives. We expect that services should meet our standards for high quality care and that we will be treated with respect and dignity throughout. We welcome the continuation of the debate in Wales and we look forward to inputting our views in more detail following the publication of the Green Papers in Wales and England.

For more information

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