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**FIRST STEPS TOWARDS A NATIONAL CARE SERVICE WELCOMED BY
COUNSEL AND CARE**

Counsel and Care welcomes the Prime Minister's announcement (29 September 2009) that older people assessed as having critical needs will get free homecare from October 2010 in England.

The Prime Minister's commitment to developing a national care service and ending the postcode lottery in care for older people builds on the recent care funding green paper. The national care service now needs to be made a reality for all older people needing care and support, wherever they live, as soon as possible, says the national charity.

Stephen Burke, Chief Executive of Counsel and Care, said: "Free homecare for older people with the highest needs is a big step towards creating a national care service. It must be properly funded to ensure that older people with critical needs can continue to live in their own home and to ensure that another postcode lottery in care is not created. It will give thousands and thousands of older people the choice to stay in their own home rather than moving into residential care.

“Creating a national care service will put care on the same footing as the NHS. Now we need to flesh out what a national care service will provide for all older people and their carers and how it will be funded. The consultation on the care funding green paper is critical to shaping the future of care and meeting the needs of all older people, whether they live in their own home or in a care home.

“The current care system is unfair and unsustainable for our ageing population. More needs to be invested in prevention to help older people much earlier before their needs are ‘critical’ and we need a fairer way to pay for care. Universal information and advice is vital to give all older people and their carers choice and control over their care and support.

“Counsel and Care has supported the comprehensive funding option in the green paper. This is the simplest option giving all older people the care that they need. But it has to be fairly funded - a care duty on estates, for example, would be a fairer way to pay for the national care service.

“The big care debate has been given added momentum by the Prime Minister’s announcement. The whole country needs to get involved in the debate because care is everybody’s business. Better care is key to the country’s social and economic success.”

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

- Counsel and Care is a national charity working with older people, their families and carers to get the best care and support. Advice on issues affecting older people and carers can be obtained by calling 0845 300 7585 or emailing advice@counselandcare.org.uk. Counsel and Care’s

Advice Service opening hours are 10am-4pm Monday-Friday except Wednesday afternoons.

- More information about Counsel and Care can be obtained from www.counselandcare.org.uk