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RESPONDING TO OLDER PEOPLE'S NEEDS: HOMECARE MUST REFLECT PERSONALISED CARE, SAY NATIONAL CHARITY AND HOMECARE PROFESSIONALS REPRESENTATIVE

Counsel and Care, the national charity working with older people, their families and carers and Ceretas, the professional association for those working in homecare, have today called for homecare to be transformed in line with government policy that suggests that more older people should receive care at home. Fair charging and more time for care workers to carry out their duties are amongst the recommendations for a new vision for homecare.

The two organisations have today published a policy paper *The Future of Homecare: responding to older people's needs* - which was developed in consultation with leading homecare experts. In light of the current Big Care Debate and recent policy announcements by government and opposition, it has never been more timely to discuss what a transformed homecare service should look like as we move towards a personalised social care system.

The paper argues that policy and practice are still out of alignment - the rhetoric about keeping older people at home for as long as possible does not match with tightening eligibility criteria and rising charges that mean more and more older people are unable to access the care that they need.

The current government has pledged to provide free care at home for those with the highest needs, but it is not clear what this will mean in practice - and implies that those with low needs will still not receive care at all, and will have to rely on the support of friends and family, or pay for it themselves.

Caroline Bernard, Policy and Communications Manager at Counsel and Care and the paper's author, said:

"Older people with care needs who wish to remain in their own homes must be offered a real choice today. Whilst we welcome the current government's plans to address the homecare needs of those deemed to be critical, there is still concern about how homecare can become part of the prevention agenda mooted in the current green paper.

"There needs to be a mature conversation about how we can address the needs of all older people receiving care at home, rather than taking a piecemeal approach."

Mary Bryce, Chair of Ceretas, said: "Homecare services already deliver a personal service albeit with restricted practices that are often determined by those who commission the service. We need to ensure that these restrictions are removed so that real choice and control takes place in partnership with the people who need support and those providing it."

The paper calls upon government, commissioners and providers to:

- Listen to older people themselves, who say they want flexible, high quality responsive services

- Include unpaid carers in the care debate, as they are often the people who pick up the pieces when older people cannot access care from their local authority
- Make a review of homecare charging a priority whatever the level of need
- For the new Care Quality Commission to take forward the work started by the Commission for Social Care Inspection's report *Time to Care?*
- Deliver the social care workforce strategy to encourage better respect for care workers
- Ensure that care provided by homecare staff is of a high quality. Safeguarding must be put before funding
- Housing must be linked into homecare more meaningfully. Older people who wish to live in supported housing should not be threatened by the removal of the Supporting People ring-fence
- Allow homecare to move seamlessly into residential care where necessary.

The two organisations also call for stakeholders responding to the social care funding Green Paper *Shaping the Future of Care Together* to highlight the importance of homecare to the transformation of social care.

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. *The Future of Homecare: responding to older people's needs* will be launched at the national children's and adults' services conference in Harrogate on Thursday 22 October 2009. The paper can be downloaded from www.counselandcare.org.uk/influence/publications

2. 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 can be obtained by calling 0845 300 7585 or emailing advice@counselandcare.org.uk.
3. Ceretas is the professional association dedicated to individuals working in home care. Members receive practical support and advice on issues that affect them and Ceretas lobby government and others on issues affecting their members.
4. More information about Counsel and Care can be obtained from www.counselandcare.org.uk
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