

**EMBARGOED 00:01 6 September 2010**

## **Exclusive Research Reveals Widespread Confusion over Care for Older People**

### **8 out of 10 not informed about care options for older people**

As part of ElderCare Week, 6-12 September 2010, national charity Counsel and Care reveals that there is a severe lack of public understanding of and information available on the care system for older people. In a survey of over 1,300 UK adults (ranging from 18 to 90), Counsel and Care found that just 5% believe the social care system is easy to navigate.

Further findings reveal:

- 79% think that not enough is done to tell people about the care options available.
- 74% are unsure of the level of care that they, an older friend, or relative, are entitled to.
- 71% do not think the government has a clear and consistent policy on care and support of older people.

### **Uncertainty over care funding**

Although most of the respondents think that care is provided through personal finance, a worrying 64% said they had not even thought about how to fund their own care. This is even though it is now estimated that one in five of today's 65 year olds will need care costing more than £50,000<sup>1</sup>. Seven percent expect to receive full financial support from their local council, leaving just five percent who have already made specific provisions.

*Only 21% agree with the current council financial assessment and the means-test for care.\**

- A third (33%) believe that central government should be responsible for care funding and raise the money through taxation.
- Almost a fifth (19%) think local authorities will meet all their care costs.
- 38% think that the local authorities should make a financial contribution based upon a case-by-case assessment of an individual's needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Lansley, Health Secretary, press statement 20.07.2010

### **Confusion over care entitlement**

The survey also highlights respondents' uncertainty over what care advice and provision they are entitled to from their local council. Worryingly, 42% do not think councils offer a free assessment of an older person's needs, which is often the first step towards obtaining a care plan and accessing care and support, and is, therefore, an extremely important part of the process. All councils are obliged to provide a free assessment for anybody who appears to be in need, regardless of a person's finances.

69% believe their council would help if they had physical difficulties, but disturbingly just over half (53%) thought the same would apply for mental health, indicating that there is still a certain amount of confusion surrounding care in this area.

Almost half (48%) are unaware of the range of day-to-day help that their local council might provide.

### **Sourcing current care information**

Most people (69%) turn to the internet for information on care for older people, followed by GP surgeries (58%) and local council or social services (52%).

Counsel and Care has updated its guides and factsheets, of which there are more than 60, that are available free of charge from its website at [www.counselandcare.org.uk](http://www.counselandcare.org.uk), and in hard copy. These guides help people to navigate the system, and also highlight the various care options available to them.

### **Stephen Burke, Chief Executive of Counsel and Care, said:**

"This research demonstrates that there is a fundamental lack of public understanding and knowledge of the care system. In the long term this could prove to be disastrous, especially when examining issues such as funding. It is vital that the public recognises the importance of planning ahead, both on a practical and financial level, to reduce the stresses and costs involved when accessing care in older age.

"The social care system is about to undergo reform with the newly appointed commission on the funding of care set to report by next summer. When this reform takes place, universal information, advice and advocacy must become an integral part of the new care and support system.

“By raising awareness and holding local events through ElderCare Week and our annual debate and Graham Lecture, we intend to highlight some of the main pitfalls of the process and guide people through the care maze. Our new ‘five point plan’ for care and support provides people with signposts to help them plan ahead for their care needs, and by publishing it online and in hard copy, we hope it will be a useful and easily accessible tool.”

## **ENDS**

\*Currently older people with savings of under £23, 250<sup>1</sup> are eligible for financial support from local councils towards their care, but this depends on the level of need that the individual council will meet. Those with savings over £23,250, no matter where they live in England, are not eligible for council funding, but may receive Attendance Allowance if they need care or supervision.

<sup>1</sup>£23,250 is the upper capital limit used for the financial assessment process in the England. In Scotland the figure is £22,750 and in Wales it is £22,000.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

- Case studies and comments/interviews with Stephen Burke or the speakers at Counsel and Care’s annual debate and Graham Lecture (John Stapleton, Emma Soames and Winifred Robinson and Denise Robertson) are available upon request. ElderCare Week is taking place from 6-12 September, with events being held around the country offering advice on care for older people. On 8 September Counsel and Care is holding its annual debate and Graham Lecture in London, which will be chaired by presenters John Stapleton and Winifred Robinson, and the lecture will be delivered by writer and broadcaster Denise Robertson.
- 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](mailto: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](http://www.counselandcare.org.uk)

### **For further information, please contact:**

Emma Beresford/ Laura O’Connell/ Anna Geffert, The Wriglesworth Consultancy on telephone: 0207 427 1400 or email [e.beresford@wriglesworth.com](mailto:e.beresford@wriglesworth.com) or [a.geffert@wriglesworth.com](mailto:a.geffert@wriglesworth.com)  
Caroline Bernard, Anna Passingham, Counsel and Care on telephone: 020 7241 8555.