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A PATIENT CENTRED NHS MUST MEAN REAL CHOICE AND A REAL VOICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

National charity Counsel and Care welcome the government's plans to bring patients to the centre of health and social care in order to have a 'real voice' in their own care. The charity calls for better commissioning which must include commissioning for outcomes for patients and not just outputs. However, the charity asks, how do we provide 'real' choice in the face of such drastic and wide ranging cuts?

Counsel and Care is concerned about the lack of information on how local health and well being boards will be managed, with the potential for creating yet another postcode lottery. There are further fears that GP consortia are not sufficiently tried and tested and if there is not a universal buy in from GP's, the detrimental impact on those with care needs will be enormous. There must be clear guidance from the government on how these services will support patients to be participants in their care and won't further marginalise those with support needs.

Caroline Bernard, Acting Chief Executive, Counsel and Care, said: "Older people are one of the biggest NHS user groups, and they tend to have joint health and social care needs as they experience multiple conditions. The Health and Social

Care Bill promises choice for patients and this is welcome, but it must deliver just that - real choice.

"Our concern is that as local authorities face cuts and are charged with managing the new health and wellbeing boards, real choice and real voice will be a myth rather than a reality for many older people.

"The legislation that flows from this Bill must ensure that older people can receive the best care and support, where ever they live."

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. More information about Counsel and Care can be obtained from www.counselandcare.org.uk
- The Care Concerns 2009 report is based on a sample of 2,746 telephone enquiries taken by Counsel and Care's Advice Service in 2009. Copies can be downloaded from our website: www.counselandcare.org.uk/influence/publications
- The full list of the Counsel and Care guides available to download from: <http://www.counselandcare.org.uk/advice-and-information>