

**NEWS RELEASE**

**Immediate release: Thursday 20 January 2011**

Contact: Lili Hoag 020 7241 8523 (out of hours Caroline Bernard on 07760 191579)

**COUNSEL AND CARE PREDICTION REALISED AS HOMECARE CHARGES ON THE INCREASE**

As foreseen in Counsel and Care's 2010 survey of council care charging, older people needing homecare now have to face huge increases in the cost of care. The report out today from Which? finds councils asserting that government funding cuts mean that there is insufficient cash, and those who have to pay for their own homecare are having to pay even more.

The national charity predicted that a 'double whammy' would hit older people and their carers, as in its 2010 survey some councils were already increasing charging for home care, as well as tightening their eligibility criteria for access to services.

In the Counsel and Care survey, over half of councils surveyed confirmed that they would be carrying out budget cuts in social care or a reduction in the range of services available.

Six of the councils surveyed openly stated that they were considering increases to home care charging. A further four were known at the time to already be consulting on raising charges.

The Department of Health has responded to the Which? report, saying that private and voluntary sector providers are being looked at to offer support to older people and their carers. However, in a world where the voluntary sector is hugely affected by the local government cuts, Counsel and Care is not convinced that this is the whole solution.

Caroline Bernard, Acting Chief Executive, Counsel and Care, said:

“Counsel and Care is not surprised at the findings in the Which? report. In 2010 we warned that if these short-sighted plans were put into action, that the impact would be felt first by the most vulnerable, who will have to go without vital care and support. The impact will then fall onto acute health services as people are forced to reach crisis point before they get help.

“This is not the only choice for local councils. We are aware of councils who are extending their eligibility criteria to support older people with low and moderate needs.

“The cuts now affecting the whole of social care will only cost the public purse more in the long run. Whilst we acknowledge the pressures that local authorities are under, we once again call on councils to protect vital frontline services for older people and their carers. This worsening postcode lottery highlights the need for urgent reform to create a fair, simple and sustainable care system for older people and their families and carers.”

**-ENDS-**

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. Counsel and Care surveyed 56 local authorities across the country during August 2010. The results provide a snapshot of charging policies and eligibility for services during this period.
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 and carers can be obtained by calling 0845 300 7585 or emailing [advice@counselandcare.org.uk](mailto:advice@counselandcare.org.uk)
3. Counsel and Care's Advice Service opening hours are 10am-4pm Monday-Friday.
4. More information about Counsel and Care can be obtained from [www.counselandcare.org.uk](http://www.counselandcare.org.uk)