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'NO HELP HERE': INCORRECT AND OFTEN ILLEGAL ADVICE IS MAJOR CONCERN FOR OLDER PEOPLE WITH CARE NEEDS

Worries about older people being given incorrect and illegal advice by their local authority has become the emerging issue for Counsel and Care's advice service in 2010, according to the *Care Concerns 2010* report published today (22nd March 2011). The report is based on the over 250,000 older people, their families and carers who access Counsel and Care's Advice Service a year via telephone, website, guides and publications. This includes over 3,000 detailed cases supported directly by our Telephone Support Service.

Last year, an increasing amount of calls to Counsel and Care's advice service were from families, carers and older people concerned about councils taking a 'no help here' stance when asked for care assessments. People are being told that because funding is unavailable, that the older person cannot have an assessment, even though legally all older people are entitled to a care assessment by their local authority.

Everyone with a care need is entitled to an assessment by their local authority to ascertain what care they will need. The assessment doesn't mean that the Council will provide the care but it does provide a reassuring and objective picture of someone's needs.

Enquirers' main concerns in 2010 included:

- Older people being given incorrect and often illegal advice by their Council;
- Unplanned hospital discharge, with social services not being involved in the process;
- Councils not declaring a standard rate for care, and imposing 'across the board' requests for third party top-ups from families

Peter Watt, Chief Executive of Counsel and Care, said:

"This report clearly shows that the changing economic climate is impacting badly on the services received by older people, their families, and carers. Simply rationing care is not a sustainable solution to supporting older people. But the pressure on Councils to deliver in-year and front loaded savings means that decisions that will deliver longer term sustainable savings are not being taken.

The result is short term decision making that certainly will not take forward the Government's stated aim of supporting people in their homes and preventing deterioration in their condition.

This is a year of great change and we look forward to the outcomes of the Dilnot Commission on the Funding of Care and Support and the Law Commission review of social care law. However, any changes made must have the provision of quality advice and information at its heart. This will ensure that all older people are able to get the care and support that they deserve."

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

- Care Concerns 2010 can be downloaded from:
<http://www.counselandcare.org.uk/category/publications-for-professionals/pdf/care-concerns-2010> and is also available in other formats on request by emailing lillian.hoag@counselandcare.org.uk
- 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