

Age UK - Key points summary & response

Key points:

- **Long term funding reform.** The Government has indicated its support for the principles of the approach recommended by the Dilnot Commission – a cap on lifetime contributions and an increase to the means test threshold. However, no clear commitments have been made on implementation. Instead the Government has stated it, *'will work with stakeholders and the official opposition to consider various options for what shape a reformed system should take, based on the principles of the Commission's model, before coming to a final view in the next spending review'*.

Nor has the Government committed extra funds to address levels of unmet need or to close the current gap in funding (which we estimate is around £500m in 2011-12).

While we recognise that the Government's commitment to the Dilnot approach is an important milestone we are concerned that, with no clear plan for how they intend to deliver on this commitment, there are no guarantees that the proposals will be put into action soon, or possibly at all. Care reform and funding reform must go hand in hand to be really meaningful and failing to address the funding question risks undermining the whole system.

- Government has published its **response to the Law Commission review of adult social care** and, based on this response, **the draft Care and Support Bill**. The intention is to consult on this draft before putting a Bill before Parliament in the next session.

The draft Bill is largely based on the Law Commission's recommendations, which Age UK strongly supports. It retains and clarifies most of the current rights of older and disabled people and adds important new legislation, including rights to services for carers, and legislation to safeguard adults at risk of abuse.

- **Introduction of a new eligibility criteria and a national eligibility threshold.** These will be developed alongside a new assessment system to replace the existing Fair Access to Care Services.

Age UK welcomes the commitment to introduce a national threshold, signalling an end to the unfair postcode lottery. We have called on Government to ensure a new threshold is set at a decent minimum level (we believe this should be moderate or its equivalent in the new system) and that eligibility criteria are based on outcomes social care should achieve.

- **Measures to improved information and advice** at a local and national level. The Government has committed to setting up a single national online portal for information about health and care, and investing £32m in the development of local authority websites providing local information about care and support services.

Improved access to information and advice is a positive step forwards. However, we are concerned by the White Paper's emphasis on online tools. Information and advice needs to be accessible to all those who need it and in a range of formats.

- Age UK has welcomed measures to **enhance coordination of care and promote between local authorities, health and housing services**. These will be underpinned by new legal duties on local authorities to promote integration and additional investment in integrated and coordinated care models.

- Local authorities will have a new duty to incorporate **preventative practice and early intervention** into care commissioning and planning. Commissioners and providers will be supported by a new national care and support evidence library.

We hope this signals a shift in focus from crisis intervention to prevention and early intervention. Supporting people to manage their needs at an earlier stage can reduce demand on the more intensive health and care services, as well as improving quality of life and maintaining independence and wellbeing.

- Government has reiterated its commitment to **personalised services** as the underlying principle shaping the provision of care services. This will be underpinned by: a new entitlement to a personal budget; a right to request a direct payment; and new duties on local authorities to promote diversity and quality in the provision of services and to provide

access to independent advice and support for people eligible for local authority funded support.

Age UK is pleased that personalisation remains a guiding principle for the care and support system. Improving the quality of managed personal budgets is particularly important for older people who do not choose a cash payment for their care. However, it remains vital that personalisation is seen in broader terms than simply rolling out personal budgets and direct payments.

- We are pleased that the importance of housing has been recognised in the White Paper through **improved access to housing aids and adaptations**, as well as **availability of extra care and sheltered housing**. In particular, we welcome measures to develop a greater variety of housing options, as well as allocate more support to ensure existing housing is suitable.

- Introduction of new **national minimum standards for workforce training** and a new **code of conduct both emphasising dignity and respect**. The White Paper also announces a new Chief Social Worker role and improved support for development of leaders in the sector.

Age UK has welcomed the reforms to workforce and training. Through the Dignity in Care Commission we called for a review of the pay, status, training and regulation of care workers. We hope that Government intends to implement these proposals as part of a wider look at staffing in the care sector.

- Age UK has welcomed long overdue improvements to carers rights. There will be **increased legal rights for carers to both assessment and services**, significantly strengthening their entitlements to support.