

**Healthwatch Worcestershire**  
**'Caring for our Future'**  
**October 2013**

**Background**

In response to the Government's proposed changes to the law regarding what and how people pay for care and support services in the future Healthwatch Worcestershire recently carried out a wide ranging consultation exercise on the proposed changes with the Worcestershire community, comprising a countywide survey, focus group and workshop.

Our responses to the five questions raised in the consultation paper leaflet are detailed below, but first we have some general observations and recommendations to make.

**General Observations & Recommendations**

Firstly, even after a great deal of clarification a high percentage of people involved in each consultation exercise still found it hard to understand the changes proposed and what state funded care and support they will be entitled to in the future – including 30% of those who responded to the survey.

Our first **recommendation** is therefore that the Department of Health allocates sufficient time and resources to communicating these changes to the wider public, if you are to achieve your aims regarding people staying healthy and well for as long as possible, and also people taking steps to plan financially and practically for the future

Secondly, although the 'Caring for our future' paper is focused on 'how' questions regarding implementation of the proposed changes a lot of the debate at our focus group and workshop centred on 'what' these changes were and whether they are fair and just.

Our second **recommendation** is therefore that the Department of Health allocates further time and resources to engaging with the public to clarify and justify the proposed changes, alongside the time and resources required to consult on their implementation.

In particular there should be greater clarity regarding the fact that the cap on expenditure only applies to eligible needs, as our view is that if set at the proposed £72,000 level for people moving into a care home it will probably only benefit a minority of people, given that the majority are likely to die before they reach the cap.

## Department of Health Questions

1) How should assessments work for people who pay for care out of their own money?

- There was no consensus on this topic
- Opinion varied between survey and focus group/workshop respondents as to whether assessments should be undertaken face to face with someone or undertaken on-line / by oneself
- Opinion also varied as to whether assessments should be undertaken by local authority staff or whether it did not matter who as long as people have the necessary skills and understanding

2) How could we make sure people understand the rules that decide how much money they may get from their local council to pay for their care? **and**

5) How should the Government, local councils, the care sector and financial services providers work together to help ensure that people are aware of and prepared for the reforms?

- There were a range of views on how the government (both local and national) should communicate the proposed changes to the wider public
- National media is seen as an important medium to get the messages across, but equally local community agencies are also seen as vital
- Either way the messages should be constant and as simple as possible
- The challenge is to change culture and the attitude that “It won’t happen to me”

3) How should your local council work out how much it pays to meet your needs?

- The consensus of opinion was that that social isolation and its negative impact on mental wellbeing should be given as much weighting as physical needs and their impact on activities of daily and personal living (and that it is not given enough weighting at present)

4) How could we make sure you continue to get the care you need when you reach the cap?

- This question was not covered in our consultation exercise on the basis that it was too advanced an issue to address, since people would have to fully grasp the basics before they could understand the relevance of this question

### Next Steps

Healthwatch Worcestershire is committed to continued engagement with the local community on these proposals over the coming two to three years as the new laws are implemented. We would therefore request that the Department of Health keep us fully informed of all future developments with regard to these proposals, so that we can respond on behalf of the Worcestershire community.

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