

Response to Shaping the Future of Care Together



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Dear Care and Support team

Homeless Link is the national membership organisation for agencies working with people who are homeless across England. We have over 480 members. The services provided by our members range from local authority housing services, housing associations, day centres, outreach services, residential care homes, hostels, supported housing, floating support through to employment, training and education.

Our specific interest in responding to Shaping the Future of Care Together is in raising awareness of the issues around the homeless client group. Evidence from the Older People's Needs Audits developed by the Coalition on Older Homelessness at Homeless Link shows that some older people stay in hostels for ten or even twenty years. Hostels are designed as temporary accommodation and are not suitable for people to grow old in. **Sixty per cent of this older population in the surveys experience multiple problems, a mixture of mental ill health, challenging behaviour, chronic physical health, memory problems and incontinence, to name some of them.**

People who have had substantial periods of homelessness are very marginalised and vulnerable and generally have not had opportunities in their lives to accumulate savings or to buy property. They have generally lost contact with family and do not have partners or relatives to support and care for them in their old age or when they are ill or disabled. Recent research by the Salvation Army reveals the extent to which neglect and abuse in childhood is associated with later homelessness¹. It is particularly with this group of homeless people in mind that we are making our response to the consultation paper.

The paper refers to the group of people over 60 being the wealthiest generation this country has ever seen and that people over 60 in 2004 held £932 billion of equity in their homes. It must be remembered that the other side of this equation are people who have never owned their own property, people who live on the poverty line on the state pension and are at a higher risk of dying in the winter every year for want of the money to properly heat their homes².

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[http://www1.salvationarmy.org.uk/uki/www_uki.nsf/0/58A56A802FEAE3EC802575E5004A2FED/\\$file/The%20Seeds%20of%20Exclusion%202009.pdf](http://www1.salvationarmy.org.uk/uki/www_uki.nsf/0/58A56A802FEAE3EC802575E5004A2FED/$file/The%20Seeds%20of%20Exclusion%202009.pdf)

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<http://www.networks.nhs.uk/uploads/cold%20illness%20admission%20and%20winter%20mortality%20W%20Yorks%20presentation.pp>

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For these reasons we believe that getting a system that works for homeless people will be a good benchmark to check that it is a system that works for everybody and will take account of those on the margins and those who do not have family carers to fall back on.

We recognise the huge challenge that we face as a society in relation to people living longer and people with disabilities who need care and support having longer lives. We recognise there are changing expectations coupled with the demographic change; meaning by 2029 there are expected to be only three people under 65 for every person over the age of 65 years.

The way in which we care for our older and disabled population is a fundamental question about the type of society we are building and the answers we come up with about how we find the resources for that care and support and how it is organised have profound implications about our values and whether we put as high a value on the lives of people who are not economically active as those who are.

Homeless Link has framed our response around the consultation questions but making particular reference to people who are homeless. The key points we would like to see given more prominence are:

- A recognition of the complexity of need and of the key role of housing related support in relation to prevention.
- A national safety net that provides a good standard of care for everyone regardless of their ability to pay
- A system that promotes interdependence and mutual responsibility
- A re-valuing of the role of care and support in our society with more status and reward for people working in social care and a recognition that as a society we have to pay for good quality care.

Consultation question 1

The six principles outlined are important and provide a basis for a coherent system underpinned by national rights and entitlements but responding to personalised and individual needs. Three principles that we would like to see added to the basic expectations are:

1) A national minimum standard

People need to know what they can expect from care services and have a clear transparent and accessible means of appeal if the service they are offered falls below that standard.

2) Services delivered with respect and dignity for the person.

Dignity is a by word in the delivery of care to older people currently because there is often a lack of dignity in the way that care and support is offered and there is a long way to go to ensure our care and support services deliver with dignity. When we are vulnerable and seeking help we all know that the way in which that request is received is of fundamental importance. We need to have experienced and skilled staff on the front line, not a gate-keeping approach operated through a call centre with low paid and low skilled staff. The introduction of a comprehensive assessment framework and cutting out the necessity of multiple assessments is important but almost more important is how that assessment is done. We need to develop a better paid and more valued workforce along the lines of Scandinavian countries, and accord social care a higher status as a profession.

3) A recognition of complexity of need

As the homeless sector our member agencies deal with people with some of the most complex needs, who are often not getting a statutory services because they do not fit their criteria. The

user group have multiple and overlapping care and support needs, it may not be clear whether their primary issue is mental health or substance dependence, they don't accept services easily and their behaviour may be chaotic and challenging. It is essential that these types of needs are recognised and addressed within policy. Assumptions need to be challenged about the range of support needs that older people are likely to have; increasingly functional mental health problems, alcohol and drug dependence and challenging behaviour are likely to be present in the older population and the provision of care and support will need to acknowledge this complexity.

We are particularly concerned that the section on prevention does not recognise the huge role that Supporting People plays in supporting vulnerable people with housing related support. Receiving such support allows vulnerable people to continue to live independently or to make a transition towards living independently. The section on prevention in the paper is about mainstream 'universally accessible services' such as GP's, leisure centres, support from families and communities, and employers promoting health and well being. The group of people with whom we are concerned do not have access to many of those services, and to gain access to them might use the housing related support and advocacy available through Supporting People funded services. Supporting People is no longer ring fenced and is part of the area based grant which makes us more concerned that the vital nature of these type of services, which have a significant national budget of £1.61bn (with a net financial benefit estimated to be £3.41bn per annum) only get a passing mention as 'housing related support which can also help to keep people safe'.

Consultation question 2

Homeless Link is in agreement that to make a National Care Service work services will need to join up more effectively. When people are feeling in need of care and support they are at their least able to negotiate different systems, understand how things fit together, fill in different forms for benefits, and housing and undergo different assessments for social care and support. We need to move to a more holistic system where all these agencies work better together.

We are pleased that there is recognition in the paper that joined up working is particularly important for people with complex needs who often need many different agencies to come together and support them and for whom good co-ordination is vital. Too often our experience is that there is a waste of resources with agencies or teams; all being unwilling to accept responsibility for a referral, often because the system is not designed to provide care and support to those with complex needs. A joined up NHS and National Care Service will not necessarily resolve this issue unless the budgets are pooled.

The duty to produce JSNAs across local authorities and PCTs about the needs of the whole community should be helpful in encouraging joint working. The inclusion of the Supporting People programme in the area based grant opens up opportunities to be more flexible and innovative in joint commissioning arrangements across housing related support, social care and health. We hope these opportunities will be taken and that the needs of the non statutory client groups such as single homeless will not be neglected in favour of those whose needs are traditionally met by Adult Social Care.

Consultation question 3

Homeless Link prefers the option of a comprehensive system of funding social care. We agree with those in the consultation period that expressed a preference to something closely aligned with the way in which the NHS works. Social policy now recognises the need for social capital and the idea of community is at the heart of many government policies. A system of funding social care which gives us a sense as a society of our interdependence and where

everyone's life is equally valued and supported, promotes community and a sense of mutual responsibility.

Growing old and increased dependence on others is an almost universal experience. Decent care delivered with dignity when we are old or have disabilities is expensive and needs to be paid for. The length of our life and the level of care and support we will need is unpredictable. Even for those with the capacity to save it is impossible to know whether you are saving for five years or thirty post retirement. A system in which basic care and support is provided for free and people pay into a state insurance system on the basis of what they can afford and alongside that there is a free care system for people of working age is the fairest of the proposed options.

The vast majority of people who become homeless have had troubled early lives, abusive or neglectful parenting, time spent in care or in institutions, often a history of offending or drug or alcohol dependence. They have often remained on the edge of care systems. We need to ensure that as they go into later life they are not further disadvantaged by not having the capacity to access long term care and support should they need it. Many will not have led lives that will have placed them in the position to save for the future. They too need peace of mind and to have their fears and worries about the future allayed.

In relation to the question about whether the system for funding care and support should be a fully national system or a part national, part local or a local system we feel that a part – national, part -local system is the best option. People need to be able to move around without risking their care package and without needing to be re-assessed. However a degree of flexibility for local authorities to be able to respond to local circumstances and a degree of local democratic accountability about the decisions that are made on funding and delivering care and support is also important.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the future of care and Support and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss our response in more detail and to facilitate further discussion with our members on these issues. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss our response. sarah.gorton@homelesslink.org.uk

Yours faithfully

Sarah Gorton
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