

Navigating the way: the future care and well-being of older people
Dining Room A, House of Commons
Monday, 8 December 2008

Welcome by Dr Alan Whitehead MP

As a society, we are living a lot longer than in the past. What will happen with domiciliary care if more elderly people stay in their homes? If elderly people can't stay in their homes, what will happen with residential care? Residential care is very expensive to run and we need to think about the long term, and it is especially important to consider publicly-funded care homes and domiciliary care.

It's also important to consider the role of Local Authorities. Can Local Authorities continue to fund care? Should the service be part or fully nationalised? Should it be run locally or on a national level? Are the funds available for any of this?

He was relieved that he didn't have to answer any of these questions and that he can now hand over to Clive Cowdery, the Foundation's Chairman! Congratulations to the Resolution Foundation on what they've done so far and he is looking forward to what will come next.

Clive Cowdery

Long term care is a key issue at this time. In 2009 there will be a Green Paper on long-term care, hopefully to be followed by a White Paper.

The Resolution Foundation began work in 2005 and focuses on one policy area at a time. Access to Generic Financial Advice was the first project and since the beginning of 2008, the Foundation has been working on long-term care. What ties these two projects together is what drives the work of the Resolution Foundation – improving outcomes for low-earners, those often referred to as “too rich and too poor” who often lose out in the mixed economy.

The Foundation began work on long-term care at the beginning of 2008 using desk-top analysis to overview what work was already out there. The Foundation initially thought that the driving issue to make the system operate more effectively would be money, however, it turned out to be the issue of entitlement.

The 'blanket' of the welfare state does not cover long term care as it was left out of the Beveridge report because most people didn't live long enough for long-term care needs to become an issue. The Resolution Foundation's work has looked at the functioning of the long-term care market as a whole with the most recent work honing down on three areas that are critical components of a reformed system. The first is a National framework with a clear entitlement; the second is seeking an empowered role for Local Authorities, in particular in shaping the market; and the third is navigation, particularly with a focus on a 'One Stop Shop' as the best option for helping older people navigate the maze at a vulnerable time in their lives.

Phil Hope MP

Mr Hope agreed with Clive that policy-based evidence making should be avoided! Demographic changes over the next 20 years mean that we must focus attention on this issue and this will particularly concern funding. What are we going to fund? How will services be provided? How can we ensure that dignity and personalisation are preserved?

The Government's priority is to change what they can today. They are prepared to give money to Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts to help enable this change. Small changes can make a big

difference and it's important to share information and good practice. They are working with the Dignity Champions to deliver this change, in particular working with Michael Parkinson (Dignity Ambassador) to work out ways to treat people with dignity now. People working in the sector need to look at their work and think "what can I do differently to support dignity?"

As Clive highlighted, fairness is also a critical issue. The Government has to intervene in the care market, especially over the next 12 months given the economic climate. We need fairness in the way people are treated and personalisation is an important part of this. Personalisation means applying "the human touch" and treating people with kindness.

Funding is also an important issue. We need to consider: what is an equitable settlement? The Green Paper in 2009 will discuss this question and models will give insight into the next stage of the debate. Independence, choice and control should always be kept in the forefront of any discussions on the funding of long-term care.

Attitudes are also an important issue. Baby boomers are going to have different attitudes to ageing than previous generations; they are going to be active and have a desire to contribute to society. This change in attitudes means we're going to have to think about age in a different way in the future.

Mr Hope would like to build a consensus across the country and across parties on "the right way forward".

Norman Lamb MP

Welcomed the work carried out by the Resolution Foundation and feels that the current system of long-term care is "broken". Older people are often left isolated, especially those living in rural areas. We are seeing a decline in the availability of Local Authority services especially around tightening criteria and a lack of funding. The money that is available is not always used in a coherent or sensible way. The demographic changes in society are a "time bomb" that we can't ignore.

He agreed with Phil Hope that we have to build a political consensus because the new system needs to be sustainable into the future.

He agreed that establishing a National Entitlement is key as it's crucial for everyone to know that the State will contribute something to the pot; this will combat the sense of unfairness that currently exists. He pointed to the Care Guarantee that the Liberal Democrats have advocated. He also said that access to support, advice and advocacy is key.

He stressed that we need an independent process to gain consensus, along the Adair Turner level of importance and that is why the work of the Resolution Foundation is so welcome at this time.

Sue Regan

Thanked attendees for their time, and said that the Foundation will continue to engage with key stakeholders. She reiterated the Foundation's commitment to the current agenda on long-term care and its lasting reform. She also asked people to stay in touch and let us know how they think we can add value next year.