



REFRESHING THE NATIONAL CARERS STRATEGY

Call for Evidence

The previous Government's national Carers Strategy – *Carers at the heart of 21st century families and communities*¹ – was published in June 2008. It set out a vision that by 2018:

'carers will be universally recognised and valued as being fundamental to strong families and stable communities. Support will be tailored to meet individuals' needs, enabling carers to maintain a balance between their caring responsibilities and a life outside caring, while enabling the person they support to be a full and equal citizen.'

Ministers and the Standing Commission on Carers² believe that the vision in the Carers Strategy holds good. As part of the process for informing the Spending Review³, the Government must prioritise its actions for the next four years to ensure maximum value for money in the context of the current economic climate and the Government's top priority of reducing the national deficit.

The Government is therefore 'refreshing' the Carers Strategy with a view to producing, before the end of this year, a clear plan of action for 2011 to 2015.

This will set out the key activities upon which the Government – working in partnership with Local Authorities, the NHS, employers, the voluntary sector, local communities and carers – can focus from April 2011 onwards, within the context of the 'Big Society' and the capacity of the community to support and empower people. The Government is not seeking to re-write the Carers Strategy.

The Government is keen to seek your views now on the key priorities on what will have the greatest impact on improving carers' lives in the next four years. The deadline for responses is 20 September 2010.

¹ Available to download at:

http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20100509080731/http://dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_085345

² The Standing Commission on Carers is an independent advisory body, providing expert advice to Ministers and the Carers Strategy Cross-Government Programme Board on progress in delivering the strategic vision of the national Carers Strategy.

³ For more information about the Spending Review see http://www.hm-reasury.gov.uk/press_10_10.htm

The Government appreciates that this is a tight timescale but it is a necessary one if the Government is to help inform decisions in the light of the Spending Review and influence planning by Local Authorities, the NHS and others for April 2011 onwards.

This document sets out the main ambitions of the previous Government's Carers Strategy, and asks what you believe are the top priorities on which we should focus in the next four years, (including personal experience of what has worked well and proved most cost-effective).

Some important points to note:

1. The Government recognises that the issue of carers' benefits is important and will consider this area separately under plans to simplify and modernise the benefit system. In this call for evidence, we are interested to hear about support other than cash benefits that would help to improve carers' lives.
2. The consultation on the extension to the right to request flexible working for all, referred to in the Coalition Government's Agreement, is separate to this call for evidence and will be launched by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) later in the year.
3. The Commission on the funding of care and support has recently been established to make recommendations to the Government on how to achieve an affordable and sustainable funding system for care and support, for all adults in England. The Commission will consider evidence from stakeholders including carers as part of its work and will set out how it will engage on this issue shortly.
4. When submitting views on priorities, please be mindful that the present position with public finances makes it likely that there will need to be 'trade-offs' in order to determine the highest priorities.
5. The Carers Strategy relates to health, social care, education and training in England, to benefits in Great Britain and to employment in the United Kingdom.

The outcomes identified for 2018 (as set out in the strategic vision of the Carers Strategy) are:

- Carers will be respected as expert care partners and will have access to the integrated and personalised services they need to support them in their caring role.
- Carers will be able to have a life of their own alongside their caring role.
- Carers will be supported so that they are not forced into financial hardship by their caring role.
- Carers will be supported to stay mentally and physically well and treated with dignity.
- Children and young people will be protected from inappropriate caring and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive, to enjoy positive childhoods and to achieve against all the *Every Child Matters* outcomes.

Each of those outcomes is very important but the Government is seeking evidence on what actions are most likely to deliver them. **In your view, what are the priorities to focus on in the next four years?**

Coalition Government's Agreement

The Coalition Government's Agreement⁴ recognises the importance of carers to families and communities and sets out that the Government will look to provide support to carers particularly through:

- extending the roll-out of personal budgets to give people and their carers more control and purchasing power;
- using direct payments to carers and better community based provision to improve access to respite care;
- extending the right to request flexible working to all employees, consulting with business on how best to do so; and
- establishing a commission for long-term care which will consider how to ensure responsible and sustainable funding for long-term care.

NB: The points from the Coalition Government's Agreement are included for background purposes only. We are not seeking views from stakeholders on the Coalition Government's Agreement.

How the Government is distributing this document and collecting views

This call for evidence will build on the extensive consultation with carers undertaken by the previous Government in developing the Carers Strategy and all the evidence contained in it. The Government encourages all organisations responding to this call for evidence to seek and reflect the views of carers about priorities.

The following people and organisations are being asked to disseminate this document through their networks:

- Local Authority Chief Executives
- NHS Chief Executives
- Directors of Adult Social Services and Children's Services
- Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and Association of Directors of Children's Services – Carers Reference Group
- NHS Confederation
- Local Government Association
- Government departments
- Voluntary sector (including Carers UK, Crossroads Care, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, Alzheimer's Society, Age UK, Mencap, Rethink, Macmillan, Disability Alliance, Counsel and Care, The Children's Society, National Young Carers Coalition, RADAR – The Disability Network, Disabled Parents Network, Council for Disabled Children, National Children's Bureau, Barnardo's, Contact a Family, National Black Carers & Carers Workers Network, The Afiya Trust and others)

⁴ Available to download at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf

- Care Quality Commission
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Employers for Carers
- Confederation of British Industry
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Employers Engineering Federation
- Institute of Directors
- British Chambers of Commerce
- Trades Union Congress
- UNISON
- Centre for International Research on Care, Labour and Equalities (Leeds University)
- Personal Social Services Research Unit

It is also available to download at the Department of Health website at:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Dearcolleagueletters/DH_117249

Please forward this document to others who you think may wish to respond.

Summary of key milestones

- 20 September 2010 – deadline for responses to this call for evidence
- September - October 2010 – analysis of evidence received (involving Standing Commission on Carers)
- Autumn 2010 – publication of plan for 2011-2015 (after the outcome of the Spending Review is known)

If you wish to respond

From Tuesday 3rd August you will be able to type your views and ideas directly into The Carers Centre website via our CarersVoice pages completely anonymously and we will pass them to the government without identifying you:

<http://www.prtcarserscentre.org.uk/carersvoice.html>

You can email the Minister directly: (this will not be anonymous)

carersevidence@dh.gsi.gov.uk

You can write to:

Carers Evidence
 Carers Strategy Team, Department of Health
 Area 116, First Floor, Wellington House
 133-155 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UG