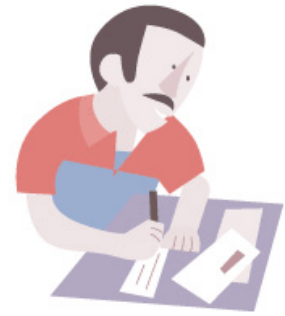




Paying for Care in Wales

Creating a fair and sustainable system



Consultation Event

**Friday 27th February 2009 from 10.00am – 1.00pm
at Neath Port Talbot CVS, Tŷ Margaret Thorne,
17-19 Alfred Street, Neath**

Introduction

In many countries around the world, the impact of an ageing population is leading Governments to consider how care and support systems should be organised and funded in the future.

In Wales, this process began last year with the publication of *Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities* - a Strategy for Social Services in Wales. That process of change is continuing with this consultation; and it provides a basis for an open and transparent debate about the way in which we pay for care and about how that should change to meet future needs.

When we talk about “care” we’re describing services and other activities that help people to live independent, active and healthy lives, and to be part of the community.

A lot of these services help older or disabled people do day-to-day things such as:

- Live in their own home
- Work
- Cook
- Shop
- Care for their family.

At the moment, approximately 81,000 people in Wales receive local authority-funded social care, 67,000 of them in the community and 15,000 in residential care. A further 12,000 people receive nursing care funded by the NHS.

Some examples of what we mean by care services are:

- Meals on wheels
- Home adaptations
- Housing support services
- Benefits for disabled people
- Occupational therapy
- Day care
- Care homes
- Support for carers

There can be no doubt that reform of the current system for funding care is needed. In Wales, we already have a higher proportion of older people than the rest of the UK and over the next 20 years many more people will live longer and in better health. This development should of course be celebrated, but it will also increase demand and pressure on services. It has been predicted that a large funding gap will open up between the cost of care services and the money that is available to pay for them. We, rightly, will expect to receive high quality care and support which is tailored to our needs. We will expect our independence and dignity to be safeguarded. These factors will present real challenges that must be addressed if the care system is to meet the aspirations we have for it and if it is to be both affordable and sustainable.

The way that we pay for care at the moment has a number of weaknesses:

- It's complicated and therefore difficult to understand and follow
- It's inconsistent across the different care categories
- It's unfair to some users – for example those who have worked hard and saved some money.

The event gave an opportunity to hear the national and local perspectives from guest speakers and enabled participants to voice their views about how we can create a fairer and more sustainable system for paying for care in the future.

Guest Speakers

Gwenda Thomas AM
Deputy Minister for Social Services
National Context



Tony Clements
Head of Community Care Services
Neath Port Talbot CBC
Local Context



Consultation

Building a new consensus about the future funding of care and support is one of the main policy challenges of our time - it affects, or will affect, a majority of people in Wales. This is difficult territory and there are no easy solutions. However, the Assembly Government wants to conduct an open and transparent debate to shape the development of more detailed policy options.

Everyone should be able to have their say about how a new system should work, because every adult in Wales will be affected by these changes. Many of us will need care and support when we get older, or we'll have family members or friends who'll need it.

Through workshops the participants had an opportunity to have a say about how care should be paid for in the years ahead.

Focusing on:

Sharing responsibility for resourcing the provision of care -
how we should share responsibility for paying for care in the future.

Setting fair rules for financial support –
the best way to use the pot of money that is raised, and to think about what looks to you like the fairest way of allocating financial help to people who need care in the future.

Information from the event was forwarded to the Assembly Government, the consultation responses across the country will be used to shape and influence the Assembly Government's, and the UK Government's, plans to change the system for paying for care. These plans will be set out in Green Papers for Wales and for England in 2009.

Event Overview

Total number in attendance including participants, speakers and facilitators – 39, individuals were divided into 4 workshops.

Participants were made up of Third Sector Organisations and Community Groups from Neath Port Talbot.

Workshop Discussions

Topic 1 – Sharing responsibility for resourcing the provision of care

Who should contribute more for care in the future?

Individuals who use care and support services (by paying for their own care)? How could this work?

- 9% of participants felt that individuals who use care and support services should pay for their own care.
- Concerns were raised regarding individuals who are unemployed and unable to contribute to care costs.

Families of people who use care and support services (by looking after them or paying for their care)? How could this work?

- 17% of participants felt that families of people who use care and support services should look after them or pay for their care.
- Concerns were raised as some individuals have children living in other areas who would not be in a position to give care.
- Should use of capital in properties be used to pay for care if the family are providing significant level of care?
- When family members give up work to provide care they **MUST** receive sufficient financial support – Carers Allowance is not enough. It was felt that there should be more incentives for unpaid carers. Need to look at the carers statistics for Wales.
- Sufficient support for carers – more money and places for respite, to give unpaid carers a break.

- The responsibility for caring should not be put onto children (young carers).
- The whole family should plan and pay into a social care fund – tax free saving scheme.

Everyone in society? How could this work?

- 74% of participants felt that it was everyone's responsibility to contribute to care costs.
- Participants felt that everyone should contribute throughout their working life.

Other Comments

- It was noted that benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance are often not spent on what they are meant to be – there should be clear, strict guidance, and monitoring of use.
- Many participants felt that people who work hard all their lives are penalised by the current system. Many people stated that there should be a percentage cap on assets to prevent individual's losing the whole value of their property and savings.
- The current system does not encourage individuals to save, those who do not save do not have to pay, this was seen as unfair and strongly expressed in all workshops.

If the current system is reformed, in which general direction should changes be made?

- When asked to look at different options for how a new system could work the following was recorded:
 - Equity Release Schemes – 4%
 - Taxation – 34%
 - Social Insurance/ Saving Schemes – 62%

However through the workshops it was felt by many participants that the new system needed to be a combination of schemes – essential to get the balance right.

- If Equity Release Schemes are to be encouraged this needs to be done in a safe way giving protection to individuals – some participants felt it should be run through local authorities.
- Many participants felt that the best way to create a fair and equal system was through a compulsory social insurance.
- The question was raised regarding how the long term unemployed would pay the insurance – would it be through their benefits? Would the state pay a percentage?
- Individuals should have opportunities to pay into a private scheme as well as a national scheme.
- If there is a taxation scheme it needs to be clearly defined - there needs to be money ring fenced for care costs and not to go into a central pot.
- Many individuals do not want to be means tested – this sometimes prevents them seeking the care that they need.

Topic 2 – Setting fair rules for financial support

Topic 2a – Should there be a national or local framework for financial support?

In the future, should central government or local government decide who is entitled to help and what they are entitled to?

- 77% of participants felt that central government should decide who is entitled to help and 23% felt it should be local government's responsibility.
- Local Authorities work differently, paying for care needs to be centralised as this will ensure consistency and get away from the postcode lottery.
- Costs for services should be the same across Wales. When individuals relocate there must be a consistency of service provision across all authorities.

- Although money would be raised nationally some participants felt that the social care funding pot should be administered locally – using local knowledge and flexibility and setting appropriate priorities.

Topic 2b – Should there be the same level of support for all, or greater support for people with certain needs?

In the future, should everyone for needs care services receive the same amount of help? or

Should the government give more help to people who are unable to plan and prepare for their own care and support (for example disabled people, or people who have had an accident or sudden illness)?

- Difficult to legislate for individuals in complex situations for example people with mental health problems or substance misuse.
- A fair funding solution that will cover all ages and disabilities is required. If individuals are born with disabilities their care costs will be considerably more than someone with low care need in later life.
- If compensation is claimed for injuries received through an accident the money should be used towards the after care required.
- It was felt that everyone should be given appropriate help and support according to their individual needs.

Topic 2c – To what extent should your income and assets be taken into account?

In the future, should everyone who needs help receive the same amount of help, or should government give more help to people with low incomes or assets?

- Although means testing was not popular amongst participants it was felt necessary in certain situations.
- There must be assistance given to people on low income to ensure they have an equal service.

Other comments

Was there anything else your group discussed?

- Questions were asked regarding individuals who come to live in the UK from another country and have not paid into the Social Insurance or other schemes. There is a need to identify if the UK Government can claim off their country of birth. How do UK citizens pay for care when they have moved to another country – need to research.
- There should be fair, consistent and equitable national system for all.
- Benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance should be used appropriately.
- Those who have worked and saved throughout their lifetime should not be penalised – cap on property and savings.
- The Government needs to encourage more services to be delivered by the Third Sector. Many services are cheaper and have added value compared to statutory sector provision.
- The Third Sector is important in playing a part in meeting care needs – investment must be appropriate - could have a role in planning and commissioning services,
- The system must be made simpler and easy to understand – user friendly.
- If nothing is done the current system will collapse – there is no option but to change.
- Money should be put into preventative services – encouraging healthy living early in life to increase health and well being in later life, this would reduce care needs and pressure on the system.
- Some participants did not feel happy about insurance schemes eg America; this is clearly an unfair system, where only those who can afford to pay insurance get support.
- The social care pot of money should be used for social care costs not used to top up health.

- Personalisation Agenda (Individualised Budgets/ Direct Payments) often cheaper and provides a more person centred support system.
- The need to improve the support systems such as home adaptations and equipment, which would enable individuals to live independently – some people have to wait 18 months, sometimes longer.
- Whilst acknowledging that this is a consultation about future provision, it was felt that current provision needs to be more flexible and responsive – telecare and assistive technology packages should be easy to access.
- Simplified systems - need to have extensive research on systems and good practice from other countries.
- Some participants felt that resources were being wasted within current services. There is a need to review and change existing systems now which could have an immediate impact, resources need to be better utilised.
- Early appropriate intervention can lead to a longer cost saving by maintaining independence for longer.
- Existing provision needs to be more flexible to ensure best value for money and needs are best met.