

Adult Social Care Green Paper : Discussion Paper

Section One: What should social care services do?

The government's vision for the future of social care is that services are designed to help people stay independent for as long as possible. It believes that people should have more choice and control about the way that their needs are met. The Green Paper states that services should help people:

- To have better health
- To have happier and more enjoyable lives
- To be able to contribute to society and use their skills
- To be able to have more choice and control over their lives
- To be treated fairly and well, and feel safe within their communities
- To have enough money to live on and to be able to afford to take part in their communities
- To have the help they need to look after themselves and their homes, and feel good about themselves.

In Buckinghamshire, the county council agrees that people should be supported to live independently and improve their lives.

Do you agree that social care services should aim to achieve these things?

Are there any other things that we should be trying to do?

Section Two: People should have more control over their lives and the choices that they can make.

The government believes that we should help people to have control over their own lives, and that people should be able to make choices about how they live. People who use social care services need to be supported in making choices. This involves getting the balance right between enabling people to make mistakes, and protecting them from harm.

Users of social care services need to be provided with good information about the services and equipment that are available to them so that they can continue to live independently. The majority of services and equipment are provided to people following an assessment of a person's needs. We need to make sure that these assessments properly take account of what people want for their lives, this can involve helping people to work out what they want to achieve in their life with the support of social care services.

The government wants to see more people being able to make their own self-assessments where this is possible, and wants agencies to be able to share information between each other about people, so that people don't have to provide the same information over and over again to different people and agencies.

Questions:

What do you think about how we can give people more control over the way they are assessed for services, and the risks that they are able to take?

Do you think that information sharing between government agencies is a good idea?

Section Three: People should have more choice about the services they receive

The government wants to give people more power to choose the services that they get. Part of the way to give people more control is to give people more power to choose what services to buy. Essentially the government believes that this can happen through two ways.

Firstly, through extending the use of Direct Payments where people are given the money to pay for the services that they need and they can choose what services to spend the money on. At the moment there are a number of legal restrictions on the services that this money can be spent on. In Buckinghamshire, we try to be as flexible as we can, however there are times when the rules about direct payments mean that people don't have the amount of choice that

they would like. The government is proposing to extend the use of direct payments and to relax some of the rules surrounding them.

Secondly, the government is proposing the use of Individual Budgets. An Individual Budget means that people are told how much money they can have for services to meet their needs. People are then able to say how they want this money spending. Individuals do not directly pay for the services, or hold the money, but are in charge of where the money is spent.

The government believes that by using more Direct Payments and Individual Budgets people will be able to have a greater choice in how they get the services they need. The government also believes that this will mean that services are of a higher standard, as individuals are able to choose which services are bought, service providers will need to ensure that their services are good quality and are attractive to service users.

Questions:

Do you think we should make it easier to have a Direct Payment?

Suggestions from the Government include allowing family members to manage direct payments for people who cannot manage money themselves. ***Is this a good idea?***

Do you think Individual Budgets will help people get more control over the services that they receive?

Do you think that they will help to increase the quality of services provided?

Section Four: How these changes will be made

The government has established the post of Director of Adult Social Services. Each local authority will appoint a Director of Adult Social Care to ensure that social care services to adults are well managed and are of good quality.

The government believes that it can achieve the changes in adult social care services without spending any more money. This means that we will have to make these changes by spending the money that we already have in different ways. There are three main ways that the government believes we can do this:

Firstly, it believes that we can make a number of efficiency savings. In Buckinghamshire we are looking at the way that we deliver services and trying to identify ways that we can use the money we get better. This is something that we are doing across the whole council and not just in social care services.

The second way for making the money go further is to work more closely with other agencies, in particular agencies from the health service, housing services and the providers of social care in the voluntary and community sector.

The third way the government believes that we can use money better is to spend more money on helping people to be independent, by providing services at an earlier point in people's lives. This should reduce the amount of money we have to spend at a later point when people have more needs, and need more expensive services to meet them. At the moment Council's have to set their criteria for saying who can get social care services under the government guidance called 'Fair Access to Care Services'. These criteria would have to change to allow us to be able to provide more services at an earlier point in people's lives. But will mean that we have less money to spend on the people who have more needs.

The government believes that we could spend money on people when they first need services, rather than spending more money later when people's needs are greater.

Questions:

Do you agree with this? Or, Do you think we should continue to spend most of the money on people who need the most support?

Do you have any ideas about how different organisations could work better together?