

Proposal for a Joint Investigation into Continuing Care in Buckinghamshire

Continuing (or 'long-term') care is defined as 'all forms of continuing personal or nursing care and associated domestic services for people who are unable to look after themselves without some degree of support, whether provided in their own homes, at a day centre or in an NHS or care home setting'.*

In recent weeks the national media has highlighted a potential shortfall in the ability of public services to meet future demand for continuing care services. The national demographic growth in the numbers of older people in the next 10-20 years is amplified in Buckinghamshire where there is a greater proportion of older people than the national average.

In 2006, Derek Wanless highlighted the under-funding of continuing care in recent years and identified the need for significant investment in order to meet the demand for provision over the next two decades.

Buckinghamshire's public sector, like many other areas, is living with significant financial pressures, and members have learned of concerns for future continuing care provision from both within the public sector and from representatives of service users.

A recent Department of Health consultation proposed changes to continuing care criteria, with the aim of standardising the application of criteria across the country. This could have a significant implication for the provision of continuing care services within this financial framework in Buckinghamshire.

In view of local concern, the Chairmen of the Public Health OSC and the Adults' Services OSC are proposing that a joint working group is set up to investigate the state of continuing care for service users and patients in Buckinghamshire.

The working group, which would have a membership drawn from the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees, would have the following purpose:

1. To clarify the provision of continuing care in Buckinghamshire by considering a 'care pathway' approach, using a number of 'typical' case studies
2. To understand and consider the direction of travel and strategy of partner organisations in meeting the challenges of future demand for continuing care services
3. To identify where there may be barriers to access or continuity of provision and to make recommendations for improvement

* Joseph Rowntree Foundation: Inquiry into Meeting the Costs of Continuing Care, 1997