

Health and Social Care Committee

Consultation on terms of reference for inquiry into residential care for older people

RC28 ToR – Age Cymru



Consultation Response

Inquiry into residential care for older people – draft terms of reference

October 2011

Introduction

Age Cymru is the leading national charity working to improve the lives of all older people in Wales. We believe older people should be able to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, have adequate income, access to high quality services and the opportunity to shape their own future. We seek to provide a strong voice for all older people in Wales and to raise awareness of the issues of importance to them.

We are pleased to provide our views on the draft terms of reference for the Health and Social Care Committee's Inquiry into residential care for older people in Wales.

Comments

We welcome this Inquiry and broadly agree with the suggested terms of reference. We are particularly pleased to see the inclusion of:

- the process by which older people enter residential care and the availability and accessibility of alternative services;
- the quality of residential care services and the experiences of service users and their families; we are encouraged that the Committee recognises the need to consider families and we believe carers should be included as a specific addition.
- the effectiveness of services at meeting the diversity of need amongst older people; we strongly support this and note that it is important to consider the specific needs of minority groups such as BME and LGBT older people.

We also approve of the inclusion of the management of care home closures, and the effectiveness of the regulation and inspection arrangements for residential care, including the scope for increased scrutiny of service providers' financial viability –

this is something Age Cymru have been calling for, particularly in light of the Southern Cross care home closures.

We believe it would be beneficial to also include the following items in the terms of reference:

- **Staff training**

The second item on the terms of reference mentions staffing in regards to resources. We believe that levels of staff training and identified training needs are also crucial issues which should be covered by the inquiry.

Training on issues such as basic values, dementia awareness and equality and human rights need to be assessed and prioritised by residential care homes.

NB: Item 2 of the terms of reference should also mention ‘appropriate equipment’ after number of places and facilities.

- **Access to information and advice**

We believe it is important to examine the availability of, and access to, information and advice for residents, as well as their families and carers. The Inquiry will also need to link up with the forthcoming Older People’s Commissioner’s review on advocacy in care homes.

- **Activities provided in care homes**

It would be valuable for the Inquiry to look into activities for stimulation and learning opportunities provided for residents in care homes. Also whether the residential care home has links with the community and provides opportunities for mutual interaction and engagement between residents and the wider community.

The final issue we feel it is important for the Committee to consider is how we pay for care. The Inquiry will need to be mindful of the recommendations of the Commission of Funding of Care and Support in England (Dilnot Commission), the UK Government’s response (if it emerges during the lifetime of the Inquiry), and the impact this may have on Government policy and care funding in Wales.

Furthermore, additional items which could be considered during the Inquiry are:

- **Care plans** - quality and consistency of care plans for residents
- **Engagement and consultation with residents** - the extent that residents are empowered to have choice and control over their lives and consulted over changes in their residential homes

- **Continence management** - how continence and incontinence needs are assessed and managed.
- **Dementia awareness and planning** - the extent that the care home reviews the environment to identify improvements to stimulate residents with dementia and take their needs into account.
- **Monitoring and recording** - the accuracy of monitoring and recording key activities (such as medication, meals, etc) within the residential homes.

Conclusion

We hope these comments are useful to the Health and Social Care Committee. We would be more than happy to provide further information as required. We look forward to contributing to the Inquiry in the future.