



Date: NOT FOR RELEASE BEFORE 00.01 SUNDAY, 10 APRIL 2005.

Equal access to care: CCC calls for urgent action on care assessment

Responding to the publication today of the Commons Health Committee's report, *NHS Continuing Care*, CCC congratulates the Committee on its important and clear report on the shortcomings of NHS-funded continuing care, following its inquiry prompted by the extraordinary number of complaints received and investigated by the Health Service Ombudsman.

CCC wholeheartedly agrees with the Committee's recommendations and calls for urgent action to make equal access to care a reality. CCC supports the Committee's view that it is impossible to distinguish between social care and health care, and joins its call for these streams of service and funding responsibility to be integrated.

CCC calls for clear statements from political parties to outline their intentions to remedy the policy and practice inadequacies revealed in the report so that older people and their families may consider the parties' policies in the run up to the General Election on 5 May.

Focusing on assessment, Dr Clive Bowman, Chairman of CCC, said

"The Committee's findings and recommendations paint a dismal picture of the experience that older people continue to confront at a most vulnerable time in their lives. CCC strongly supports the Committee's aspiration that high quality care is encouraged through incentives to increase and maintain independence. However, we must recognise that the number of people with chronic progressive conditions is increasing and will continue to increase. As their health deteriorates they must be able to get the changing care that they need. They must not be discriminated against".

CCC has consistently argued for a single assessment tool, not merely a national set of criteria, and has serious concerns that further iniquity will be inevitable unless there is an early and firm commitment to a single instrument.

A single assessment tool should not just be used to determine eligibility for resource. It should inform the care an individual receives at the outset and as their needs change. It can also determine whether people are getting the care they need. Whereas the Committee suggested that patients should be reviewed annually at the very least, CCC recommends that a quarterly reassessment would best safeguard the wellbeing of the frail, who often are recipients of care for short periods.

CCC believes that the Committee has highlighted some important issues, and has concerns that go beyond the remit of the Committee's inquiry.

- Not only have the long term care responsibilities of the NHS reduced substantially, health service support to people in care has diminished. CCC calls for an urgent Healthcare



Commission investigation into the standards of service available to people resident in care homes.

- Policymakers and politicians seeking to develop a sustainable system of care provision and funding can only do so if they have access to sound data. The only way it can be derived is from collated information built up from consistent assessments.

- ENDS -

Notes for Editors:

1. Contacts for further information:

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2. The Health Committee's report has a strong resonance with CCC's long-term care policy healthcheck, [The Best Care Possible?](#), published on 3 November 2004, which identifies a wide range of issues and outlines measures needed to enable people to get the best care possible to meet their needs.
3. CCC is a broad-based, independent coalition of commercial, charitable and public service organisations with a shared interest in providing better long-term care for older people. CCC has been acting as an advocate for managed change since it was established in 1992 as the Continuing Care Conference with the objectives of:
 - increasing awareness and developing understanding of long-term care of older people as a political issue
 - raising the standards of care available to older people
 - developing the standards of financial products used to fund long-term care
4. CCC believes that all older people in Britain should live their lives in dignity, comfort and in a place of their choosing. We want all elements of society to make the necessary individual and social investment to ensure that happens. Our task is to ensure that policy-makers pursue this goal and to encourage the public to join with us in our mission to persuade them to do so.
5. CCC's Chairman is Dr Clive Bowman FRCP, Medical Director, BUPA Care Services. More information about CCC, including its members and Steering Group, are available at www.ccc-ltc.org.uk.
6. CCC's submission to the Health Committee is attached.