The Future of Health and Social Care in England

A Questionnaire by Healthwatch Wandsworth working in collaboration with The King’s Fund.
Executive Summary

With increasing long-term illness being seen in an ageing population there is increasing overlap between individual’s health and social care needs. This has been recognised and changes within the NHS are being carried out to take this into account. The King’s Fund, an independent charity specialising in the promotion of good health and health care, decided to consult on these changes through the ‘Future of Health and Social Care in England’ survey. Healthwatch Wandsworth collaborated with the King’s Fund to develop a questionnaire based on this survey to gather opinions from local professionals.

Almost half of the respondents were retired with the rest working in healthcare, the charity sector and ‘other’ occupations such as education and management. The majority of respondents felt that the boundary between health and social care needed to be redefined as the distinction between the two was unclear. Approximately two-thirds of respondents felt that criteria for deciding access to health and social care should be the same, with most of them thinking that social care provision should be needs-based. With regards to funding of the services, most people felt that joint funding would be appropriate, with no overall consensus as to whether this should be at a local or national level. It was generally felt that funding should come from national taxation, although those that had the means to contribute should take some personal responsibility.

The results of our survey will be published on the Healthwatch Wandsworth website and passed on to local voluntary and health care organisations that have expressed an interest. Our results will also be included in an interim report by the King’s Fund that will be published in March.
Introduction

What?

The King’s Fund, an independent charity whose primary aim is to promote good health and health care in the country, decided to delve further into the issue and developed the ‘Future of Health and Social Care in England’ survey. Their survey was designed to answer some key questions that they felt had not already been addressed. They were particularly interested in knowing what people thought about entitlements to care, who should be responsible for paying, and whether universal and means-tested payment systems could co-exist.

Why?

With the recent passage of the Health and Social Care Act, the NHS has undergone huge structural changes. One aspect of the new legislation is the recognition of the need for improved integration of health and social care services. This is manifested in The Care Bill which proposed an update on the provision of social care and the implementation of a cap on costs. Such changes are necessary given the changing health needs of the population. With advances in medicine, more and more people are living longer. As a result, we are seeing higher levels of chronic disease which has blurred the lines between health and social care; many people’s needs overlap across the two.

How?

As an organisation that works to ensure that health and social care services meet the needs of our local population, we at Healthwatch Wandsworth felt it was important to find out your opinions. We therefore worked with the King’s Fund to develop a survey to be sent out to Healthwatch members, and local professionals in the health care and voluntary sectors. Potential recipients of the survey were first contacted by phone to explain our aims and gauge potential interest. If they expressed an interest, they were emailed a link to the questions. All respondents were able to give their views anonymously.

This report brings together the results of our survey.

NB. The percentages in the report are based on a sample size of 27
Finding Summary

Who Responded?

- 44% of our respondents were retired, having previously worked in areas as diverse as social work and banking.
- 11% worked in mental health.
- Approximately 7% worked in professions allied to health care.
- Around 7% worked in the charity sector.
- The remainder worked in ‘other’ occupations, including education and management.

The Boundary between Health and Social Care

Health and social care services are currently separately funded systems. However with the changing needs of the population, the overlap between health and social care is rapidly increasing. We therefore asked:

Healthwatch Wandsworth and The King’s Fund: The Future of Health and Social Care in England 2014
Website: www.healthwatchwandsworth.co.uk
Do you think the boundary between services needs to be redefined?

- The vast majority of our respondents said yes.
- Many felt that the distinction between the services is unclear and quite artificial, often resulting in a barrier to patients receiving the care they require.
- Many people perceived a lack of “joined up care”.
- Some people felt that the services should be combined.
- One person thought that combining services would divert resources from social services and therefore would be detrimental.

With the majority of respondents feeling that the boundary should be redefined, we wanted to find out how people thought this should be done. We asked people to:

Suggest ways of defining health and social care needs that may be more useful?

- Almost a quarter of respondents thought that a system of joint funding should be created and that there should be a single point of contact to manage health and social care needs.
- Some people felt that greater emphasis should be placed on preventative measures and that services should focus more on chronic disease (e.g. rehabilitation, health care in the home etc) rather than acute illness, in keeping with the changing needs of the population.

**Entitlement to Services**

Allocation of services is another important factor to consider so we asked:

Should the criteria for deciding access to social care be the same as for healthcare?

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents thought that the criteria should be the same.
- Most people felt that the provision of social care should be based on need, although a minority felt that some level of means testing may also be necessary.
• There was a strong feeling from some respondents that social care provision should be based on a person’s financial contribution to the country through taxes.
• One person thought that entitlement should be determined by how well individuals have looked after themselves. Those who have damaged their health, for example through drugs and alcohol, “should not expect a free and full service”.

Funding

Currently health and social care services are funded separately. We wanted to know:

Should funding for health and social care be combined? And if funding was combined, should it be at a national or local level?

• The vast majority of respondents felt that funding should be combined.
• There was no general consensus on whether funding should be at a local or national level.
• One person suggested that funding should be primarily local with national funding reserved for specific projects important to all.
• It was proposed that adjustments to funding could be made to reflect local needs and that disadvantaged boroughs could bid for additional funding.

Finally, we asked people to consider:

How much responsibility should the individual take, compared with the state, in paying for health and social care services?

• Generally people felt that provision of services should come from national taxation. Those who have not paid taxes in the country should pay for health and social care services in full.
• Two respondents felt that the state should only pay for essential treatments. Services such as fertility treatment and cosmetic surgery should be paid for by the individual. “Why should a woman who wants a breast enlargement… get this for free and yet another woman who requires bathing to prevent leg ulcers have to pay?”
• A consistent theme was that individuals should take some responsibility for financing the services if they have the means.