

Department of Health response to the public's comments on The Coalition: Our Programme for Government on Social care and disability

Thank you to all the people who submitted comments about social care and disability. The top three issues were about improving the care of older people and people with disabilities, improving palliative care services and investing in mental health services.

Improving the care of older people and people with disabilities

Later this year, we will publish a vision for adult social care, including the key next steps on personalisation.

We know that disability benefits play an important role in supporting older people and people with disabilities and we recognise that these benefits are highly valued by the people who receive them. We also know that urgent reform of the social care system is needed so that people, their families and carers have much more control and security.

We will establish an independent Commission to make recommendations on how to achieve an affordable and sustainable funding system for care and support. We want to ensure that this is a fair partnership between the state and the individual, which takes into account the vital role of families and carers. The terms of reference for the Commission have been announced and it will report by July 2011.

Making acute hospitals responsible for support and re-ablement for 30 days following a patient's discharge from hospital, as set out in the revised NHS Operating Framework for 2010/11, will help to avoid readmissions, particularly for people with dementia. Dementia is one of the most important issues we face as the population ages. As a new administration we are fully committed to continuing to improve the quality of care for people with dementia and their carers. Revisions to the NHS Operating Framework issued on 22 June confirmed dementia as a key area for local prioritisation.

The publication of the ten NICE Quality standards for Dementia will act as a vehicle to provide information about the quality of services in these ten key areas, facilitating improved transparency and local accountability. They link firmly with the objectives of the National Dementia Strategy and its implementation priorities of care in the general hospital, care in nursing and residential homes, reduction of prescribing anti-psychotic drugs and early diagnosis and intervention in primary care.

We are working with the Alzheimer's Society and other key national partners on a National Dementia Declaration, to define the contribution which each organisation will each make to support implementation of the Strategy. This will be supported by the development of a practical tool to enable local organisations to self-assess and benchmark their progress towards implementing the Strategy.

We will accelerate the pace of improvement through a greater focus on local delivery and accountability and we will empower citizens to hold local organisations to account.

Improving palliative care services

The Secretary of State for Health recently announced a review into the funding of palliative care. Tom Hughes-Hallett, Chief Executive of Marie Curie Cancer Care, will lead the review. It will look at how Government can make sure that the money intended to help support those in need of palliative care and those approaching the end of life is best spent. This will better enable patients to choose how and from whom they receive their care. The review will cover both adults' and children's services and will report in summer 2011.

The review will make recommendations for a funding system that will cover care provided by the NHS, a hospice or any appropriate provider:

- which encourages more community-based care, so a patient can remain in their own home; and
- that will be fair and transparent to all organisations involved in palliative care.

Professor Sir Alan Craft, a former President of the Royal College of Paediatrics, has agreed to work alongside Tom Hughes-Hallett.

Investing in mental health services

We recognise the importance of promoting good public health and preventing ill-health. Mental illness is common, often debilitating, and closely linked to physical illness. Understanding and addressing the causes of mental ill-health will be central to our plans for public health.

Our Coalition Programme set out our intention to ensure greater access to talking therapies. We want to offer long-term solutions to people with common mental health problems (depression and anxiety disorders) and psychological therapies do that. Working through issues gives people the skills to manage them and deal with them more effectively if they recur. Services have a clear focus on recovery and by offering employment support alongside psychological therapy, we can help people to stay in or return to work.

Our confirmation of the final instalment of growth funding for the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies IAPT programme is enabling PCTs to broaden the geographical coverage of services, meaning more people can get help, and to increase the range of therapies available, giving people more choice and access to the right psychological support.

Further information on the PFG website

- [Public comments on Social care and disability](#)
- [Video response from Oliver Letwin and Danny Alexander](#)
- [All government responses to public comments](#)