

Adult Social Services POC – 18 November 2008

Members' points arising from discussion of 'The Case for Change'

- I agree there is a need for change. We must identify what is fair.
- What is the universal or majority feeling about these things, across Kent? Should KCC follow the majority feeling?
- Has the whole of the county been made aware of the consultation and the deadline for it?
- This is an enormous problem and we must not underestimate the size of it.
- This issue should be discussed on Kent TV and Radio Kent. There should be a last minute push to spread the message before the 28 November deadline.
- Most professional workers have pensions but many people don't, and the cost of care really worries them. Those [of us] with pensions cannot take the moral high ground.
- Do we need to change the democratic structure to reflect demographic changes?
- People have struggled but managed in the past, but what experiences will people have in the future?
- Some people have spent their income on having a good life. How will they cover provision for their old age? Those who have wasted their money don't deserve to get the same care as those who have saved their money and planned ahead.
- With National Insurance, we need to be able to see what we are paying in and what this will cover in the future. Can we establish a system by which people can know that basic care will be paid for? There should be a basic standard of care provided, and there should not be a postcode lottery for basics.
- We cannot deliberate between savers and non-savers as we simply don't know individual people's circumstances.
- In applying resources we could look at the issue in two ways – (a) what have we got available to spend and how should we use it? and (b) what services do we need/deserve and how much do we need to cover them?
- The government has spent billions on bailing out banks. Where has this money come from, and where was the money when it was needed for social care? What will the government's priorities be? Will they use more money for health, social services, education etc?
- We need to address the fundamentals.
- When addressing other potential income sources we need to include tax. We must not dismiss this.
- I am not against means tested benefits.
- In the issue of savers and non-savers we have inherited a difficult moral and social judgment issue.
- We have a chance to influence government, regardless of our political standing.
- The difficulty will be to find an equitable solution.
- In terms of income tax, have we looked at European models, and can we copy something from them?

- Some private sector pensions have been reduced or lost, whereas public sector pensions are paid for by everyone out of tax. I don't believe this is fair. I think government pensions should be means tested.
- We need to be very careful in evaluating people's wealth and ability to pay – the rich can become poor through no fault of their own, via property repossession, lost pensions, etc.
- I am not sure there is any change necessary to means testing.
- We have to promote fairness to avoid anarchy.
- We cannot go on treating National Insurance as a tax; this should go into a special fund. I think it has to be income tax which replaces the current National Insurance income, and only those who cannot work are allowed not to pay income tax.
- We need a more rigorous approach to the benefits system. We need to provide a safety net but *just* a safety net.
- One size does *not* fit all.
- Adult Social Services is a needs-led service and should be funded for this purpose.
- It is difficult to think 20-30 years ahead; think how much has changed in the last 20-30 years. People will always need to have care.
- Demographics play a large part in our considerations; Kent has different demographics from other areas of the country, e.g. Kent has a large challenge in the number of residential care placements it receives from London. Funding must follow the client.
- We could look at France, Germany and Japan and the insurance top up systems which they run. This gives basic care and people can choose to top up with individual insurance if they wish.
- In terms of National Insurance contributions, I suggest employers pay a higher rate - but what about the self-employed?
- Why can't local government use business rates to provide services?
- When the green paper comes out we should have a special POC meeting which will give us a second chance to comment.
- We can't rely on National Insurance income as the world of work looks very different nowadays, and will look very different in the future. For example, there are not many final salary pensions around now, and young people start off adult life paying off large student loans, so delay paying into a pension.
- Living wills and euthanasia are not mentioned but should be part of a range of life choices.
- Changes in society and lifestyle have changed the illnesses we now suffer from and the way in which we age. Our modern diet and lifestyles have given rise to heart disease, diabetes, etc.
- We must not look just at money going in and out; we also need to look at the patterns of society.
- Many things are beyond us but could be done by the government. We could advise government of what we would do if we had the power.
- There is a sense of panic over the changes coming now, but we knew these changes were coming 40 years ago as we knew people would live longer.
- Are local authorities the right bodies to develop services, or are there other ways to do it?
- I agree that there is not a great need for change.

- Needs should be met and resources found to do it. The government will have to identify needs and find the resources to cover them. For example, in Sweden people pay 60% tax which covers the provision of good health and social care services.
- There could be changes to make the system seem fairer. If you have the capital you would be expected to pay, but the amount that you have to pay could be reduced.
- Attendance allowance should continue, and contributions to nursing care should be maintained in line with the rate of inflation.
- Continuing care etc needs more work to make it seem fairer. I'm still not sure we've got it right, or that it is seen as fair.
- It is not fair to expect people to sell their homes as soon as they go into a residential placement. Local authorities could put a charge on the house, like a mortgage. This idea could have more priority.
- I think care should be free for those over the age of 100 years.
- I don't see that it's wrong to have to contribute to your care from the value of your home. Some people have had the chance to work and save up, and others have accrued property value from the luck of the property market.
- This is our county and we should take responsibility for it. We should decide if we want to exceed what the government gives us, or else fine tune it.
- Can we find a formula for fairness?
- Should we try to find a way of addressing/removing the black economy of benefit cheats, etc?
- This is a massively important subject and it is good to be able to debate it in this way.
- It isn't a particularly political issue – getting old is not political.
- Our response will include those comments from Local Boards etc and it is very important that in our response we reflect the views of the Kent population.
- Health inequalities is an issue of great concern across the UK, and particularly in Kent.