

NEWS IN BRIEF

It is with some concern to read a recent article in The Times “NHS bosses want to force patients into Care Homes”. This article is attached.

Clearly having regards to the aging population there are increasing demands on services, population and limited financial budgets.

Great care must be taken by all of us including those reaching Retirement Age and their family and friends as to issues relating to care and financial support as we all get older.

We all like to think that we will have the time and opportunity to address any such matters as they arise. However time is not necessarily always on our side.

What would happen if you were poorly and decisions had to make as to your care and your property and finances?

Careful thought needs to be given to such matters as appointing persons who you trust to be able to make decisions on your behalf.

If you would like a free initial consultation then contact me Chris Berry at:

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NHS bosses want to force patients into care homes

Kat Lay, Health Correspondent

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Charities said that the policy was extremely worrying and could deny people the choice of where they died

Thousands of chronically ill patients could be forced out of their homes by a new restriction on NHS funding, campaigners have warned.

In some areas the health service will no longer pay for carers to visit patients at home if it would be significantly cheaper to secure them a place in a residential care home. Charities said that the policy was extremely worrying and could deny people the choice of where they died.

The money-saving restriction has been revealed by freedom of information requests to clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) across England by the campaign group Disability United.

Patients who mainly require care on health grounds, rather than because of age or disability, can have their fees paid by the NHS under its continuing healthcare programme, although the criteria for inclusion in the scheme are complex. Such patients can include terminally ill people and some with dementia or severe spinal problems.

Nineteen CCGs said that they would not fund care in a person's own home if it cost more than 10 per cent more than an alternative option such as a residential care home place. Seven CCGs set higher caps, at 20, 25 or 40 per cent. A further 11 said that they would restrict individual costs, but have not set a cap.

The *Health Service Journal* said the policy could affect more than 13,000 people receiving continuing healthcare funding. According to the last published figures, there were 60,274 patients eligible for NHS continuing healthcare funding in England at the end of September.

Restrictions are likely to be more widespread, as many CCGs did not respond to the requests for information.

Fleur Perry, an editor for Disability United, who has muscular dystrophy, estimated that with residential care typically costing about £750 a week, the restrictions would affect anyone receiving more than seven hours a day of care from agency staff at home.

She added: “Under these policies I would have been forced from my home long ago, and that’s a terrifying thought.”

Some CCGs discussed legal concerns in their policies, in particular whether the policy might interfere with an individual’s right to respect for his or her private and family life under the Human Rights Act, but concluded that it could be legally justified on the ground of cost.

Ms Perry said: “It’s not about whether it’s legal, or about the sums. It’s about the alarming idea that somebody else could take you away from the home, friends and family you care about.”

Caroline Weston, policy and public affairs manager for the Marie Curie cancer charity, said: “If someone is receiving continuing healthcare funding because they have a terminal illness, decisions about their care should be made in conjunction with them and their family and not purely based on cost. Guidance from NHS England states that people with terminal illnesses should be supported in their preferred place of care. If this is being overruled by CCGs, this is unacceptable as it may effectively be denying them the right to choose where they wish to die.”

Norman Lamb, the former care minister, described the situation as scandalous. He told the *Health Service Journal*: “If someone is capable and able to live independently, to force them to live in a care home is outrageous. It is the worst manifestation of the pressure on the system to deny someone independence because of a refusal to fund it. It treats people as second-class citizens.”

Caroline Abrahams, charity director at Age UK, said: “This is extremely worrying. It is horrible to think that an older person who wants to stay at home could now be forced to go into a care home. Not only does this go against government policy of keeping people in their own homes, it ignores the fact that in certain areas there is already a grave shortage of care home beds.”

Ian Fannon, of the MS Society, said: “This could force people who are most in need into residential care or abandon them at home with unsafe levels of care.”