



Response to:

Health and Social Care Board

**Making Choices: Meeting the current
and future accommodation needs of
older people - Proposed Criteria for
Change**

March 2014

Introduction

Age Sector Platform (ASP) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Health and Social Care Board consultation 'Making Choices – Meeting the current and future accommodation needs of older people- Proposed Criteria for Change'.

Age Sector Platform, which was established in 2008, is a charity which supports older people to have their say on the issues that matter most to their lives. The organisation has a membership base of 34 older people's organisations and networks which represent approximately 200,000 older people across Northern Ireland.

Age Sector Platform also runs the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament each year which surveys pensioners from across each county to identify their key areas of concern. Since the NIPP was established in 2011 it has held engagement events in fifteen different locations across Northern Ireland, conducted over 3,500 surveys and held three two-day parliaments where seventy-four motions have been passed by Members of the Pensioners Parliament (MPPs).

Age Sector Platform has considered the consultation proposals in some detail and our response is outlined in the following pages. We have provided some overarching comments as well as specific comments on the proposed criteria which we hope the Board will consider fully before deciding on the next steps on this important matter.

Background

Age Sector Platform (ASP) and the NI Pensioners Parliament (NIPP) has supported the general principle behind the Compton Report that home should be the hub of care for older people where possible but as long as there are the resources in place to ensure this care can be delivered to a high standard.

In 2012, the Pensioners Parliament passed the following motion.

HS8 NIPP welcomes the main thrust of the Compton Report that accepts that the home should be the hub of care for older people, with more services provided at home and in the community.

73% of delegates supported this motion (67% is needed for a motion to pass).

The following motion was also passed at the same parliament by 95% of delegates.

HS10 NIPP calls on the Health Minister to ensure that any changes proposed to health and social care takes into account any negative impact on older people and takes measures to mitigate this impact to ensure that older people receive high quality healthcare.

Over the past year it has become increasingly clear that older people's confidence in the Transforming Your Care (TYC) process has been undermined by a number of factors. This has included the uncertainty surrounding the future of statutory residential homes as well as increasing concerns over insufficient levels of domiciliary care packages in the community.

Through our consultation with older people and from hearing first-hand the concerns of residents and family members affected by some of the changes, it is clear that there is a lack of trust and confidence in the process and this uncertainty is leading to high levels of anxiety among some of those directly affected by changes.

Concerns about health and social care provision in general have increased amongst older people over the past year with 47% of older people listing it as a top concern in the 2013 NI Pensioners Parliament survey, a 16% increase on the previous year's survey.

The issue of the future role of statutory residential homes was a key concern at our 2013 Pensioners Parliament and the following motion was passed at the parliament with 96% voting in favour.

HS14 NIPP expresses serious concern regarding the recent announcements about the closing of statutory residential homes and in particular on the impact this had on current residents. NIPP is particularly concerned with the lack of engagement and communication with older people affected by the changes and calls for an urgent review to ensure this situation does not reoccur in future.

Equality Impact Assessment

Age Sector Platform remains concerned that there has been an inadequate equality impact assessment carried out on this policy and the wider impact of Transforming Your Care on older people in general.

This led to the following motion being passed at the 2013 NI Pensioners Parliament.

HS15 NIPP calls for a full Equality Impact Assessment to be carried out on the Transforming Your Care proposals as a matter of urgency to establish the full impact of them on older people.

This motion was supported by 99% of the NIPP and we still believe such an action is needed to identify the full potential impact on vulnerable older people as a result of major changes to the health and social care system.

Since last year's parliament the Health and Social Care Board has kept in contact with Age Sector Platform to keep our members informed of relevant developments on this matter. We welcome the efforts made by the Board to enable Members of the Pensioners Parliament (MPPs) to discuss the proposed criteria included in this document in more detail at two events - in Ballymena (October 2013) and in Armagh (February 2014). These events were very useful in updating older people on what stage the process was at and what main issues are being considered on this important issue. This consultation response has been shaped by the feedback from many of those who attended the events on behalf of the wider Pensioners Parliament.

Ageing Population

It is well known that we are living in an ageing population, which is a cause for celebration. The inevitable consequence of this will be an increasing need for care for older people and within this wider context Age Sector Platform believes that a clear strategy for how this will be delivered must be provided before we take any major steps such as closing Statutory Residential homes.

While the *Making Choices* document refers to alternative arrangements such as domiciliary support, re-ablement and rehabilitation, respite care and use of

technology, there is insufficient evidence to prove that these alternatives can provide at least the same quality of care as is currently provided through residential homes.

In fact, Age Sector Platform is convinced that many people currently living in residential homes could not be adequately provided for through the alternative support options outlined.

It is also important to note that within modern society where employment is taking people across the globe many family networks are not as strong as they used to be which means the ability for family to provide support for older people is also likely to reduce further in the future. We recognise that this creates a major challenge for the health system but we believe that it is something that needs to be considered as part of a strategy to ensure we have the necessary levels of residential homes provision in future.

Executive Summary

- ASP is concerned that the policy of not admitting new residents has been in place for some time and this could reasonably be viewed as a clear policy to close these homes in the short to medium term.
- ASP is concerned that a policy to either significantly reduce or end the provision of statutory residential homes has been taken without proper consultation with the public on the matter.
- The lack of detailed information provided on the alternative arrangements for any existing residents is a major omission given the obvious distress this has caused many residents and their families.
- Transforming Your Care (TYC) outlined the proposal to close 50% of homes but last year's announcements suggested a swift move to close all residential homes. This move to go further than what TYC recommended has not inspired confidence in the overall TYC programme among older people and significantly heightened fears. There must be no quick changes to policy in future without proper, robust consultation with older people and their families and representatives.
- There are clearly a number of unanswered questions around the future provision of care for older people in Northern Ireland at this time. This, combined with the obvious distress that many existing residents have experienced in recent months, leads Age Sector Platform to call on the Minister not to close any further homes until a fuller, more detailed review of future residential care is conducted. This review should consider how the statutory sector could be supported to continue to play a meaningful role in the delivery of residential care in the longer term.
- The consultation refers to the fact that there are enough 'empty beds' in the independent sector to house all those currently living in statutory residential homes. However, that alone is not a strong enough reason to pursue a policy of closure as questions remain over quality of care, choice for older people and the location of homes.

- The document is entitled 'Making Choices' but if the document is to live up to its name then it would appear that existing residents should themselves have a choice of where they wish to live. The element of choice is a key consumer principle throughout life and this is not something that should be denied to vulnerable people in the latter stages of their lives. The choice to stay where they are and where they are happy does not appear to be on offer.
- It is vital that existing residents are treated with respect, dignity and the utmost care at all times and therefore it is vital that their interests and views are fully considered in this process.
- Age Sector Platform believes that the current process must be paused to enable a more robust system to be put in place to listen to what current residents want so this can contribute to a better overall strategy that will meet the needs of existing residents but also the future care needs of older people throughout Northern Ireland for years to come. Age Sector Platform calls on the Minister to commit to a significant period where statutory residential care remains an option for older people to properly gauge whether this is something that should remain part of the care package choice for future generations.

Comments on Criteria

1. Availability and Accessibility of alternative services

ASP is concerned that there has been no measurement contained within the document of the needs of existing residents and what alternative forms of support would be put into place if their existing home was to close.

The lack of alternative arrangements for existing residents is a major gap in the document as there is not a clear picture of where these older people would be placed if they had to move and no sense of how many existing or future residents would fall into the various options listed.

ASP would question how many people currently residing in residential homes could realistically be moved back to living at home with only domiciliary support for instance. It would appear unlikely that residents currently receiving round-the-clock support could suddenly be moved into a situation where they would receive reduced support. This prompts the question that if this is the case with existing residents, why would the residents of the future be any different if their needs are similar?

The use of technology is a two-edged sword and in stark contrast to the extensive personal contact in the homes under threat. The use of more technology could actually lead to increasing isolation for many older people and this would need to be countered so this does not become another unintended consequence of change.

There is a general reference to people remaining in their local area but it is not clear what local means. It is vital that current and future residents are not removed from their local community as this would have a detrimental effect on their well-being.

The document refers to the local council area as a possible definition of local but it is unclear whether this refers to the existing 26 Council model or the new '11 Council Model'.

ASP would seriously question any plans that would suggest somewhere in the new '11 Council model' could be considered 'local' as these new council areas could lead to significant distances for friends and family to travel to visit relatives.

Many older people living in residential homes greatly value the contacts and friends that they make while living there. Therefore, it is important that, if people were being moved, that adequate provisions are put in place to enable people to move together to new homes if that is their wish.

Residential homes are the homes of the people who live in them and, like any other home; people get attached to items such as furniture. Therefore, it would also be important that if any older person was to be moved that they get the option to bring with them existing furniture e.g. their favourite chair to sit in or whatever else they feel attached to help with the transition.

ASP would also ask whether there has been any analysis conducted with individuals who in previous years may have been accepted into a statutory residential home but instead have been helped to 'self-manage' at home.

2 Quality of Care

The quality of care is the most important factor for older people and their carers and ASP believes that this criterion should be given the highest weighting in the proposed criteria.

ASP believes that a key principle in this process should be that any alternative arrangements should provide at least and preferably a higher standard of care than before. This is something that we believe should be clearly stated in any policy advocating change on this issue.

It is also vital that mechanisms are put in place to ensure such a commitment is honoured and can be measured in an objective manner.

ASP suggests that the opinions voiced by residents of existing residential homes should also be added anonymously to the list of criteria because as the end users of the service their views should be very important in any decision making process.

ASP would also ask the following questions in relation to the quality of care:

- 1 How fully will the detail of the survey be conveyed to the residents affected and to the homes under review?
- 2 If residents were to be transferred to another home would there be guarantees put in place that they would keep their current GP if they so wished?

3 Care Trends

Age Sector Platform has serious concerns over how this can be objectively measured when there has been a policy to freeze admissions over a number of years. It is wrong to refer to any under capacity in homes as a rationale for closure if such a policy has been in place. The reference to the condition of buildings can also be considered a consequence of a policy to 'run down the homes'. If investing in these buildings can lead to producing environments where high quality care can be delivered in the longer term then this is something that should be properly considered.

4 Best Use of Public Money

Age Sector Platform (ASP) is very concerned that it would appear that reducing costs is a key driver behind this policy change. An ageing population will mean that numbers of older people requiring residential care support in future will rise and we are concerned that the consultation document places little emphasis on how this will be provided in future.

While we fully appreciate that the cost of current and future care provision is a key factor in planning for the future, the cost of care cannot be divorced from the quality

of care and what is 'best value' can only be considered by including both of these factors.

The document states (on page 13) that 'the cost of a place in statutory residential care is much higher than the independent sector'. Age Sector Platform would question how the independent sector can provide at least a similar level of care at such a reduced cost. ASP would have concerns that based on financial reasons alone that moving all residential care to the independent sector could lead to reductions in the quality of care and that would not be acceptable. This is another reason why a fuller review on the quality of care provision should be embarked upon before any further steps are taken to reduce care provision through statutory residential homes.

Age Sector Platform Members

- ABC Seniors Network
- Age NI
- Age North Down and Ards Over 50s Forum
- ALLY Foyle
- Amicus Retired Members
- AT&GWU Retired Members Association
- Belfast East Seniors Forum
- Carers NI
- Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum
- Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (CSPA)
- COAST (Causeway Older Active Strategic Team)
- Communications Workers Union (NI Regional Retired Members)
- Engage with Age
- GMB Retired Members
- Greater Shankill Senior Citizens' Forum
- Hoi Sum Chinese Elderly Group
- ICTU Retired Workers Committee (NI)
- Indian Community Centre 50+ Club
- Mid and East Antrim Age Well Partnership
- Mid Ulster Seniors Network
- NASUWT Retired Members Association
- National Federation of Occupational Pensioners
- National Pensioners Convention (NI)
- Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens' Consortium
- Newtownabbey Senior Citizens' Forum
- NIPSA Retired Members Association
- North Belfast Senior Citizens' Forum
- North West Ageing Well Together (NVAWT)
- Older Women's Network NI
- Public Commercial Services Union (Associate and Retired Members)
- South Belfast Lifestyle Forum
- South West Age Partnership
- UNISON Retired Members
- West Belfast 50+ Forum

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