

There are diverse and dynamic changes occurring in today's population and tomorrow's. For one, people are not just living longer; they are working longer and providing care for loved ones for longer durations. Demands for care have also changed, and the nature of this care is increasingly focused on family carers and the support available currently and into the future, as these trends are likely to continue. The challenge of policy is reforming the system monumentally as opposed to minor changes and alterations to rules and provisions. The system needs a radical transformation in design and focus.

The changing demography of England, the greying of society, has implications beyond the current policy program. As the proportion of those living into old-age rises, the amount of care received is not keeping in line with the increase, leading to a worrisome situation of 'rationing' which undermines the government's commitment to early intervention and prevention. People need more control over their care via 'personal budgets', through the provision of universal information and advice to make optimal choices, and practical assistance – i.e. help with household activities, shopping, and other activities which might normally be reserved for immediate family and friends.

We must be concerned with how we are going to pay for services not just today, but in the future. We must concern ourselves with the long-term budgeting of services for the elderly and associated carers. There is an intrinsic debate between the individual and the state over where the burden of cost will be placed and how much will be shared, what will be provided, at what level of government decisions will be made, and how/to whom those services will be targeted. Above all, however, we must remember that this discussion is about people.

That said, there are 3 key areas which people need help: time, money, and support and practical services. In terms of time, people are looking for more flexibility in their work arrangements and services. People are increasingly challenged with balancing their work responsibilities and their personal obligations, especially in regards to providing care; a person may have care responsibilities 150 – 200 miles away from their residence while trying to manage the stress of maintaining a normal week. Employment flexibility, across

the board, and how this is managed, is crucial to adjust to the changing nature of care. As regards monetary support, people need a more effective system than the one currently in place (e.g. Carer's Allowance). Parents continue to say that care is unaffordable, and this is a significant issue to address. Something not often considered is the fact that England has perhaps the wealthiest generation of older people in the world, so there could be some discussion about how society can use these assets to manage care for today and tomorrow, e.g. social insurance schemes to pay for care support in the future using older person's assets. Finally, people need more and better information and advice to inform their decisions about care, and this is crucial in not just helping those being cared for, but also for carers themselves. The elderly are becoming increasingly isolated as more and more of them are living on their own due to life circumstances, i.e. there is an increasing number of older persons who have separated or divorced and suffer the break of familial support normally secured through relationships.

In conclusion, the debate today is about looking to the future of care, and most importantly making the design and provision of care affordable, accessible, and most importantly centred on people. Family policy in England needs to be able to stand, sustainably, for three to four generations in the future. Demographic and social trends demand a new programme of care strategy which we are charged with now, to address the needs of the future.