‘Empowering older people in care homes’

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Empowering older people in care homes

- Independent information, advice and advocacy
- Support with complaints
- Promoting ‘kindness in care’
Counsel and Care’s Advice Service

- Established in 1954, Counsel and Care is a national charity that works with older people, their families and carers to get the best care and support.

- Independent, confidential and expert advice service

- Unique, detailed advice that empowers older people, with support from their carers, to make informed choices on their own care needs.
Independent information, advice and advocacy

Counsel and Care’s service aims to empower older people and give realistic steps – not just to tell people what they want to hear, but what will actually work.

“I am so glad I contacted you. I have been so stressed about this I can now see a way forward. You are the only organisation I have talked to who has made any sense”

“Really excellent advice, clearly directed at my own questions, not just a standard response”

We do refer to local schemes, including local independent advocacy services.

Happy to also work with professionals who need advice on behalf of an older person.
Our ‘Care Concerns’ report

- 30% of calls to our advice service relate to paying for residential care.

- Enquirers’ other main concerns include:
  - Lack of available information and advice for older people, especially for self-funders
  - Poor quality care or not enough care and how to challenge this
  - Difficulty in accessing the care and support system
  - Difficulty in navigating the complaints process if you experience poor quality care
  - The ever-increasing costs of care and support
  - Worries about older people who are losing or lacking the mental capacity to make decisions for themselves.
Support with complaints

- Essential for all older people, their families and carers to make sure they have the best care and support available when they need it, in the right place.

- Vital that the fear and confusion surrounding the idea of making a formal complaint is removed

- Achieving resolution as a result of making complaint

- Being aware of their right to go to the Local Government Ombudsman as self-funders

- Access to independent advocacy must be promoted and facilitated whenever possible
Policy

- The advice we give and the enquiries we receive informs Counsel and Care’s research, influencing and campaign work for better care.

- We seek to influence government, the media, and other stakeholders on the key issues facing older people today.

- We are calling on the new commission on reform of care and support to consider how to improve quality of care as well as how the care system will be funded.
We have recently published a survey of 56 local councils’ policies on care charging and eligibility criteria, which received a lot of media coverage.

We found evidence of a potential double whammy to hit older people and their carers, with some councils considering increasing care charging as well as restricting eligibility criteria for care.

Six of the councils surveyed confirmed that they are considering increases to home care charging and a further four are known to be already consulting on raising charges.
Promoting ‘Kindness in care’

- Counsel and Care is supporting Pamela Wells’ campaign to promote quality care in care homes.

The report calls for:

- Promotion of ‘kindness in care’
- Caring people employed by management, properly supported and trained
- Better management, especially at night-time and weekends
- Stronger accountability when things go wrong.

Weblink to Pamela Wells’ report:
http://www.counselandcare.org.uk/policy-papers
Promoting ‘Kindness in care’ #2

Particular situations reported during preparation for sleep, during the night-time or early morning in care homes included:

“I heard Sylvia tell a care worker that it was too early to go to bed (6pm). Within minutes, the care worker came back and without a word pushed Sylvia in her wheelchair to her bedroom.”

“Why are all the televisions left on with different programmes blaring away late at night? “I can’t get to sleep. It is sending me mad.”

I asked the night nurse if the TV in a lady’s room could be turned down or off as she was asleep and my husband could hear every word from two rooms away. She went into the room and – woke the lady to ask her permission to switch the television off.”

“All of the residents were made to get up at 5am whether they wanted to or not. The pull cords were usually secured to the wall so they could not call for help.”
Counsel and Care conclusions

- Choice and control – older people must have access to information, advice and advocacy to ensure better quality care in care homes

- Better management and support for staff

- More personalised care in care homes tailored to each individual older person’s specific needs.
Counsel and Care

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