

Care at Home - Time for a Rethink

Introduction

The CQC report *The State of Healthcare and Adult Social Care 2016/17* points to increasing pressures in a care system little changed in 70 years. A do nothing strategy of continuing as we are with existing policies and systems is unsustainable. Aside from funding, service delivery is of huge concern, especially for the 85+ age group set to double in two decades.

Pumping money in doesn't address delivery concerns that require a rethink. Soon councils will spend 60p of every £1 from council tax on all care of which elderly care consumes the greatest share by far.

The cornerstone of elderly care is enabling people to stay in their own homes. This paper focuses on the related aspects of home care and self care. Meeting demand, extending choice and promoting quality of life are three major objectives.

Home Care

Most local authorities outsource home care to not for profit providers who employ their own staff. The provider hourly rate should reflect agreed outgoings but often falls short, leading several to terminate loss-making contracts. Clients pay a means tested rate of between £15-£20 per hour.

Imagine accessing an online social enterprise to book services required. This may be help with bathing, washing, toileting and feeding or/and cleaning or shopping. In this model a social enterprise doesn't employ staff but hosts the availability and rating of self employed carers who pay an initial and continuing hosting fee. The website shows hours, days and times available in blocks of half an hour and the scale of client charges for each carer.

This easy to navigate website also shows carers by location post-code and clients seeking care in that area. The system helps minimise downtime between clients which maximises carer time whilst reducing operating costs.

A client (or relative or friend) contacts the carer by phone, email or text. No contract is involved. The carer updates their web portal weekly to show booked sessions and those available. If away, the carer will try to arrange cover or the client goes online to request temporary cover. Each client pays the carer. The Social Enterprise is not involved.

When carers apply and pay an initial hosting fee they agree to comply with QA systems that include monitoring and training, similar to CheckaTrade. The carer agrees to notify HMRC of their self-employed status. A minimum average client rating sustains hosting for carers who pay a monthly fee. No hosting cost falls to the client.

The essence of this model is simplicity, choice, speed of response and lower unit cost of care to clients as overheads are minimised. A major benefit is involving family and friends for online access and to contact a carer if the client prefers or hasn't a computer or smart-phone. Contact can be at any time of day. The model is aimed at low dependency users.

This keeps a family in the care plan loop and if a carer needs to get in touch. It doesn't matter where a person lives - a son in California springs to mind! This system augments existing models. By removing a tranche of clients, pressure on statutory services is eased.