

NEWS RELEASE FROM
THE REGISTERED NURSING HOME ASSOCIATION

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**CSCI REPORT ON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
IS ACCUSED OF ‘MIXED MESSAGES’**

A report by the regulator of nursing and residential care homes on the outcome of its recent review of eligibility criteria for social care has been dubbed ‘a mish-mash of mixed messages’.

The Registered Nursing Home Association (RNHA), which represents around 1,200 nursing homes across the UK, says that the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) has failed to map out a clear vision for the way in which people’s entitlement to public funding towards their care costs is determined.

The RNHA says that whilst on the one hand CSCI appears to want the government to tackle the existing postcode lottery, possibly by introducing a single national resource allocation formula for social care, CSCI also appears to accept that local councils should continue to decide how much is spent on services for older people.

And whilst CSCI expresses concern that the total size of the social care financial cake may be inadequate to meet people’s needs, the RNHA believes that the care regulator is offering no practical suggestions for ensuring that additional public funding is provided to plug the gap.

Commented RNHA chief executive officer Frank Ursell: “If local councils can still decide how much money they do or do not make available to fund services for older people, whether in residential care settings or in individuals’ own homes, it is difficult to see how the postcode lottery can be brought to an end.”

He added: “CSCI claims that, with very few exceptions, there is a strong underlying acceptance that some means of limiting access to publicly funded support has to be in place. Even if this assumption is true, it is disappointing that CSCI did not itself see fit to argue for a significant expansion in those resources, unless it is happy for older people to have to dig even deeper into their pockets than they already do.”

The RNHA is disappointed that CSCI, which is due to be replaced next year by a newly established Care Quality Commission, did not use the opportunity of its latest review to make a clearer and bolder statement on funding arrangements for social care.

“In the final year of its existence, we would have hoped for a stronger lead,” said Mr Ursell. “But, to the very end, it seems that CSCI prefers to shy away from anything but platitudes on the fundamental issue of who pays for what in terms of the care provided to some of Britain’s most vulnerable people.”

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Reflecting on possible reasons for CSCI's reluctance to take a firmer stand on funding, he said: "Perhaps CSCI's position is based on an erroneous assumption that too much is already being spent on residential nursing care for older people.

"Yet demographic projections show that over the next 20 to 30 years significantly higher numbers of highly dependent older people will need 24-hour nursing support, and a recently published evaluation of current nursing home care costs by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has highlighted the fact that many councils are paying well below what independent experts consider to be a fair price for care."

The RNHA has long called for the establishment of an independent adjudicator to set a 'fair price for care' and to monitor the fees that local authorities pay towards the costs of those individuals who qualify for publicly funded nursing home care.

The association had also hoped that, as the first social care regulator to have had responsibility for both the providers and the commissioners of care, CSCI would apply some 'joined up' thinking to the whole issue of costs and fees.

Said Mr Ursell: "This co-ordinated approach has not happened, despite the fact that older people desperately need a system that treats them fairly and ensures that they receive a fair contribution towards their costs. Where local authorities fail to comply with that independent assessment, there needs to be a way of ensuring that they are required to meet their obligations."

The RNHA is also disappointed that CSCI's 'consultation' on eligibility criteria for social care excluded the associations representing nursing and residential care homes.

"We were not invited to comment or contribute to the review," said Mr Ursell. "Nor were we invited to attend any of the meetings or conferences that preceded publication of CSCI's report.

"Yet CSCI is calling for greater transparency in the social care system and is recommending that local councils should work with service providers, among others, to stimulate the development of sufficient types of services and support. There seems to be a mismatch between CSCI's words and its own deeds."

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Notes to editors:

1. *Cutting the cake fairly – a CSCI review of eligibility criteria for social care* was published by the Commission for Social Care Inspection in October 2008.
2. *Calculating a fair market price for care*, based on an independent evaluation by Laing & Buisson, was published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in September 2008.

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