

NEWS RELEASE FROM
THE REGISTERED NURSING HOME ASSOCIATION

Issued 22nd July 2010

**RNHA SAYS COALITION MUST NOT TURN ITS BACK
ON CARE FUNDING NEEDS OF OLDER PEOPLE**

With the membership and terms of reference of the government's commission on the funding of care having been announced, the Registered Nursing Home Association (RNHA) says the time has come for the country to decide how big a priority it wants to give to looking after people in their old age.

Pointing to several previous inquiries and learned reports over the past 20 years on the funding of services for older people, the RNHA believes that crucial decisions are long overdue and that successive governments have preferred to look the other way.

Said RNHA chief executive officer Frank Ursell: "We have had the previous Labour government's Royal Commission that reported in 1999. We have heard from inquiries by academic think tanks such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the King's Fund. We have also had the Wanless report.

"There has, it seems, been an insatiable appetite for talking about the problem without actually doing anything about it. Let us hope that this latest episode in 'inquiry-land' comes to something and that the government will not simply nod its head and park the problem on one side for another ten years."

The RNHA has long campaigned for a better deal for older people who need health and social care. Said Mr Ursell: "Whatever formula this government eventually comes up with for sharing costs between individuals and the state, there is no doubt that the resources invested from public funds will need to rise significantly in real terms.

He added: "The extra cash will be required not only to reflect the predicted increase in the number of older people over the next 20 to 50 years but also to deliver the quality of care they deserve.

"The government must also sweep away the infamous postcode lottery of the existing system, which condemns older people in one local authority to receive a much lower level of public funding towards their care than someone in virtually identical circumstances in another local authority."

This raises the question, the RNHA believes, as to whether local authorities are the organisations best placed to commission publicly funded care for older people, either in residential settings or at home.

more

“We need a vigorous debate on the role of local authorities,” said Mr Ursell. “Whether someone lives in Swindon or Sunderland, Mansfield or Margate, they need to know that they will be properly cared for if their health and frailty reach a point where they can no longer look after themselves. Right now, there is a totally unacceptable variation in what happens.”

As the RNHA prepares evidence to submit to the care funding commission, it is concerned that the government may play the “we can’t afford it” card at the end of the process.

Said Mr Ursell: “There is all too often a ritualistic element to government inquiries in which recommendations are made by the inquiry team. The government thanks the team for all its hard work and then kicks the proposals into touch on grounds of cost. In the current scenario of financial cutbacks, that must surely be a very high risk with regard to funding care for the elderly.

“Yet cost never seems to stop our governments from getting involved in other people’s wars on other continents. Perhaps a realignment of priorities is needed so that older people, who have paid their taxes and contributed to society during their lives, are treated with the respect and dignity they have a right to expect.”

END

For further information please contact:

Frank Ursell, Chief Executive Officer, Registered Nursing Home Association
Tel: 0121-451 1088 or 07785 227000

Notes to editors:

1. The Royal Commission on Long-Term Care of the Elderly, chaired by Sir Stuart Sutherland, reported in 1999. It concluded that doing nothing about the current system was not an option and described that system as providing no clarity as to what people can expect. It said: “Help is available to the poorest but the system leads to the impoverishment of people with moderate assets before they get any help.” It recommended that the costs of providing personal care should be met by the State and estimated that this would work out at between £800 million and £1.2 billion a year at 1995 prices.

2. In 2004 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published a report on the Future Demand for Long-Term Care. It concluded that long-term care expenditure would need to rise by 315% in real terms between 2000 and 2051 to keep pace with demographic pressures and allow for real rises in care costs of 1% per annum for social care and 1.5% per annum for health care. It also concluded that nursing home places would need to expand during that period by 150% and the number of hours of home care by 140%.

more

3. In 2002 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published the results of a study conducted on its behalf by Laing and Buisson which found that the average fees paid by local authorities for publicly funded patients in nursing homes were £74 per week below reasonable costs at average UK wages and land prices.

4. The report of the Wanless Social Care Review, *Securing Good Care for Older People*, was published by the King's Fund on 30th March 2006. The review team, led by Sir Derek Wanless, considered future funding requirements, ways of improving care outcomes, and whether there is a fairer and more cost-effective way of funding social care than the current means tested system. The RNHA strongly supported the report's recommendations that where an individual's primary needs are *health* needs, the NHS should cover the costs of long-term care, and that for individuals who require mainly social care there should be an end to the existing postcode lotteries which result from the application of different eligibility criteria by different local authorities.

5. The Commission on Funding Care and Support was established this week under the chairmanship of Andrew Dilnot, principal of St Hugh's College, Oxford and former director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies. The Commission has been asked to examine and provide recommendations on: the best way to meet care and support costs as a partnership between individuals and the state; how an individual's assets are protected against the cost of care; how public funding for the care and support system can be best used to meet needs; and how to deliver the preferred option including implementation timescales and the impact on local government.