

CARERS look after family, partners or friends in need of help because they are ill, frail or have a disability. The care they provide is unpaid.

26th July 2005

Matthew Fagg
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Dear Matthew

Guidance on the Role of the Director of Adult Social Services – Carers UK's response to the Consultation

About Carers UK

Carers UK is the leading organisation representing the views and interests of the six million carers in the UK who care for their frail, disabled or chronically ill partners, relatives or friends. Carers UK is an organisation of carers, run by carers, for carers. We have a membership of carers and over 80 Branches, run by carers, throughout the UK. We provide information and advice to carers and professionals on benefits, social care, and other rights and entitlements and receive 50,000 enquiries every year.

Carers UK is a campaigning organisation and has been since it was established nearly 40 years ago. We continue to seek change for carers so that they are able to access the same opportunities in life as others. We aim to raise awareness of carers' issues and seek changes in the law and practical support to prevent carers from poverty, having their health and well-being affected by caring and by not having a choice about whether or not to take on a caring role. Our response is therefore based on our rights-based approach to work, our information and advice queries and our views and experiences of our membership.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the guidance. Our views are limited to the broad scope of the guidance based on our understanding of carers experiences of social care.

General comments

Broadly, Carers UK welcomes the guidance and its clarity over the responsibilities and expectations that may be conferred on the role of the Director of Adult Social Services. In particular we see it as essential that at the

very top leadership recognises the role carers play in meeting the needs of adults with social care needs, and takes full ownership of responsibility for ensuring every aspect of local planning, delivery and policy is assessed for its impact on carers.

Statutory vs best practice guidance

Carers UK understands the importance of allowing scope for innovative solutions to the executive arrangements behind the planning and delivery of services for adults with social care needs, their families and their carers. Also, we appreciate that local structures and needs might suit different models for implementing a new vision for social care as set out in the green paper 'Independence, Well-being and Choice'. The focus on integrated partnership working, influencing local mainstream services and personalised services, as set out in Independence, Well-being and Choice, suggests that a period of innovation in developing appropriate executive structures might be necessary. Carers UK is reassured that the functions and duties of local authorities in relation to disabled adults, older people and carers remain embedded in legislation and, in the circumstances, have no specific objections to the Guidance on the Role of Director of Adult Social Services being issued as best practice guidance.

Influencing beyond the boundaries of social care

Carers UK welcomes the emphasis on 'championing the needs of adults that goes beyond the organisational boundaries of adult social care [and] ensuring that local providers of mainstream public services recognise and meet the needs of individual adults with care needs and their carers'. Similarly, we are pleased to see responsibility for working closely with housing support and other community services, as well as with PCTs, mental health trusts and other NHS organisations, to take a whole systems approach, placed strongly in the guidance. Leadership and standing within the social services authority, and at member level, are essential to the effectiveness of this role. However, we believe this might be strengthened by a duty on all relevant partners to work jointly. We are concerned that good intentions to influence what in many cases will be significant change - the word 'transformation' is often used in relation to universal services in IWC - will flounder as different partners may come to partnership working with different levels of commitment.

Seven key aspects to the DASS role

Carers UK agrees that these aspects seem to encompass the main responsibilities involved in the DASS role. We would like to see greater emphasis on responsibilities for ensuring the local authority discharges its legal duties towards adults with social care needs and their carers. Perhaps this emphasis might be achieved with a specific category on discharging legal duties and functions, with further details provided below outlining those duties or by referring to the relevant legislation in an appendix to the guidance.

Promoting local access and ownership and driving partnership working

Carers UK welcomes the expectation that a 'bottom up' approach to the planning and delivery of services is taken, and the specific reference to ensuring adult social services are compliant with the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004.

Promoting social inclusion and well-being

The deliverables under this heading are worded to include adults with social care needs, their families and carers. However, we were disappointed to see this is not always made clear in the body of the text in this section. For example, we note that paragraph 40 specifically highlights the need to develop models of care which prevent 'social exclusion for adults with social care needs'. Carers must be recognised as a group at risk of social exclusion. Carers UK would like the guidance to be explicit in the expectations of the DASS and their responsibility to develop models of care which prevent social exclusion for users *and carers*.

Discretion to combine the DASS function with additional functions

Carers UK welcomes the discretion to combine the DASS function with additional functions, such as leisure, housing, and community services. We believe this will offer some opportunity to establish executive functions which allow for an integrated, whole systems approach to transforming the lives of adults with social care needs and their carers. Strategic planning across agencies has an important part to play in delivering a new vision for social care at the local level.

Other comments

We note and welcome the references to the DASS working closely with the Director of Children's Services particularly in relation to assessments, sharing information and planning services to support young people moving from children's to adult services. In addition, we would like to see specific reference to the importance of working closely with the DCS in other circumstances, mainly where supporting a child is recognised as the best way to support an adult, for example a disabled parent, and vice versa, as is often the case with services for young carers.

Also, the guidance does not seem to encompass specific responsibilities for ensuring adequate mechanisms and procedures necessary for the consideration of complaints from users of social care and carers. It is not clear if this is a simple omission or if such responsibilities are assumed to fit within other deliverables. In the circumstances it may be helpful to include more explicit reference to responsibilities in this respect.

I hope these views are helpful to you.

Yours sincerely



Imelda Redmond
Chief Executive Officer