

supporting the elderly

Dating from the report 'NHS Funding for Long Term Care of Older and Disabled People' by the Health Service Ombudsman in 2003, there has been growing confusion and lack of certainty about who is responsible for payment for long term nursing care.

Usually, it is either the relevant local authority via Social Services (means tested and often resulting in the very emotive sale of the family home to fund the fees), or the NHS via the appropriate Primary Care Trust (PCT) (free of charge). Clearly, the decision as to funding is vital to most families.

Since statute (written) law was insufficient in this area, the existing law was defined by several high profile cases but this remained unsatisfactory since each depended upon individual circumstances.

The 1999 Court of Appeal case of Monica Coughlan provided the original legal test case. It said that if the need for medical or nursing care was incidental or ancillary to the need for accommodation in a care home, then care should be the responsibility of the local council and, therefore, should be means tested.

In the Grogan case in 2006, the PCT was taken to court for refusing to fund care. The family won the case and it was found the criteria applied by this PCT were 'fatally

flawed' resulting in many other families alleging the same treatment.

In January 2007, the Pearce case found in favour of the son of an Alzheimer's-afflicted mother who argued successfully that her severe medical problems should have meant that she be entitled to the highest level of funded care.

A BBC Panorama Programme in early 2006 highlighted some of the lack of certainty and contradictory issues raised.

This resulted in considerable (mostly adverse) publicity being given to the whole area. Essentially, the programme makers (and many other organisations such as Age Concern) argued that it was a 'post code' lottery and the level of support and funding available was often entirely dependent upon geographic location.

The National Framework for NHS Continuing Healthcare and NHS-funded Nursing Care, published on 26 June 2007, is an attempt to provide clarity and certainty by providing consistent access to fully funded care with clear national policies for deciding eligibility. Issues such as location, diagnosis

or personal circumstances should no longer be able to lead to inconsistencies and younger adults with long term neurological conditions and older people with dementia or other mental health needs would no longer be excluded from funding.

The full text of the Framework can be found on the Department of Health website at www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_076288 and it will be put into action by local authorities and the NHS from October this year.

Age Concern have published a useful leaflet on continuing care, available at: www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/Documents/NHScontinuingcareFS20Aug07.pdf

brushing up on dentistry needs

Following a consultation exercise (see the section below giving more details as to how this was carried out), the General Dental Council (GDC) announced in June that all dental care professionals (DCPs) would have to complete and record 150 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) every five years. One third (50 hours) of this should be verifiable. This requirement will be introduced from July 2008 when registration will become compulsory

for dental nurses and technicians. This is, of course, a lower requirement than the CPD for dentists, although the same core subjects such as medical emergencies, disinfection and contamination etc, will be covered.

Meanwhile, the GDC have announced that over 99% of dentists in the first cycle of their CPD requirement (250 hours every five years of which 75 must be verifiable) have successfully complied with the requirements.

Set against this good news, 89 dentists did not complete the hours and did not apply for extra time so are now facing possible removal from the Dentists Register. Also, the GDC have said that within the near future they will be carrying out an audit of selected dentists to provide verification of their declared CPD hours.

stakeholders and appeared on the home page of the GDC's website to allow for the widest range of responses which, potentially, included the general public.

There were a total of seven questions on the paper centred on the number of hours of CPD to be expected and possible core topics including some for those working in specific environments. 88 responses were received covering a range of 39 stakeholder organisations and 49 individuals. The results were published at a General Dental Council meeting on 6 June 2007 (full results are published on their website). www.gdcuk.org/News+publications+and+events/News+releases/Compulsory+CPD+for+dental+care+professionals+coming+soon.htm

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Details of the consultation exercise The consultation paper 'Compulsory continuing professional development (CPD) for dental care professionals (DCPs)' was published in December 2006 and consultation lasted until February 2006. It was widely publicised by being sent out to 255

GPs split over financial incentives

The value of financial incentives for family doctors is dividing British GPs, according to a survey of almost 400 doctors in the UK, France, Spain, Italy and Germany.

Carried out for the French GP magazine Le Generaliste by researchers Stethos, the report showed a higher number of British GPs were undecided about the incentives or thought them to be a bad idea than supported them. Almost half - 49.4% were in favour, compared to 24.1% who were against and 26.6% who were undecided.

Britain is the only country among those polled to have a financial incentive scheme in place under the Government's quality framework, although Germany is considering introducing a similar initiative.

The French GPs quizzed for the survey rejected the idea but those in Spain and Italy were in favour.

The survey and its full results were discussed at the World Organisation of Family Doctors (WONCA) Conference in Paris in October 2007. www.woncaeurope2007.org