

Policy Briefing: A New Settlement for Health and Social Care - Final Report

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Purpose of document

The King's Fund set up the independent commission on the Future of Health and Social Care in England. They were asked whether the 1948 post-war settlement, which has a separate system for health and social care services, is still fit for purpose, and to explore the issues of better services, increased spending and more joined up services. They have tried to establish how this could be achieved, where the money should come from, and to come up with recommendations. Proposals for a new settlement have been published in the Commission's final report.

Summary of contents

The commission review in depth, the current health and social care system. They make 12 recommendations which set out the ambition for more integrated health and social services, pathways that are simple to understand and navigate, and more equal support and treatment for equal needs.

Summary of outcomes

The report highlights a number of problems with the current settlement:

- People are living longer with more complex illnesses that require coordinated health and social care yet this need is not being met.
- Diagnoses such as cancer or advanced dementia, despite similar burdens, often leads to differences in financial support to the cost of care for the individual.
- The system is unfair because social care is heavily rationed and means-tested whereas health care is funded by taxpayers and free at the point of use.
- Funding for health and social care is kept separate. Decisions about who should pay for what causes friction and affects people caught between the systems.
- The way that NHS Continuing Healthcare operates with an 'all or nothing' assessment creates conflict between the NHS and local authorities.

The commission have concluded that a new and robust settlement to meet 21st century needs and aspirations is required. This should not be paid for by new NHS charges, private funding or insurance but by public finance.

Summary of recommendations

- A move towards a single, ring-fenced budget for the NHS and social care which are commissioned together, and a single commissioner for local services.
- Create new, simpler pathways through the health and social care system that is easy to navigate for people and their carers, and reflects changing needs.
- Introduce a new 'care and support allowance' and personal budgets giving people the personal control they should have about what support they receive.
- Increase the provision of social care that is free at the point of use particularly for those with critical needs, with support for moderate needs by 2025.

Further information and resources - NHS Confederation

nhsconfed.org/resources/2014/09/barker-commission-report-recommends-single-budget-for-health-and-social-care

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