

Mr Dougie Wands
Clerk
Health and Sport Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

18 October 2011

Dear Mr Wands

Consumer Focus Scotland welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Health and Sport Committee on the Draft Budget 2012-13 and Spending Review 2011. We note the Committee's focus on preventative spending 'on both ends of the age spectrum'. Given our recent work looking into aspects of care and support services for older people, our evidence is focused on the perspective of current and future consumers of such services.

Services that enable older people to remain at home

Providing support which can reduce the need in the longer term for expensive intensive interventions, such as emergency hospital admissions, is an important preventative action. For older people, increasing community capacity that focuses on preventative and anticipatory support, or on supporting health within the community, can: reduce isolation and loneliness; support participation; improve independence and wellbeing; and delay the stage of dependency when more complex care and support is needed.

Firstly, good nutrition and access to affordable healthy food plays a vital role in the wellbeing and health of older people. Consumer Focus Scotland and Community Food and Health (Scotland) recently published research into the availability of food services for older people living at home¹. We found significant inconsistency between local authorities in relation to the provision of, access to, information about and price of food services offered to older people. Local authorities appear not to have a clear overview of the food services available in their area, and without this information it is impossible to ascertain whether services are providing value for money or achieving the desired outcomes for consumers. For those who use the services, they are welcomed, valued and relied upon.

Research has found that, of 9668 patients (59% of whom were aged 65 years and over) who were screened on admission to hospital in the UK in 2010, 34% were at risk of malnutrition. As 71% of these patients were admitted from their own homes, the research report suggests that the risk of malnutrition largely originates in the community². At the launch of our report on food services for older people living at

¹ <http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk/scotland/files/2011/06/Meals-and-Messages-Report.pdf>

² BAPEN. 2011. *Nutrition screening survey in the UK and Republic of Ireland in 2010*

home, a strong argument was made by the British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (BAPEN), which published the research, for increasing preventative spend for the avoidance of malnutrition. The speaker quoted figures which showed that malnutrition has a greater financial cost than obesity in the UK - in 2006, malnutrition cost £7.3 billion and in 2009 this was £13 billion³, compared to a cost of £4.2 billion⁴ for obesity in 2007.

Secondly, the link between good housing for older people and improved health and social care outcomes is clear. In our response⁵ to the Scottish Government on its draft strategy for housing for older people, we welcomed the commitment to publicise and extend understanding of the role of housing support services, the contributions they can make and the benefits they can bring. When informing the preparation of the 'business case' for housing for older people we would recommend looking at best practice examples from other areas. These might include, for example, those highlighted in our earlier response to the Scottish Government consultation *Wider Planning for an Ageing Population*, from the Food Train Extra, Community First (Moray) and Mearns and Coastal Healthy Living Network⁶.

Finally, it is important that people are given the information and advice they need in order to make the best decisions about their future care. We recently carried out a small scale qualitative research project⁷ with 'baby boomers' to ascertain what they would want for a good older age. The research showed that this group feel uninformed about a wide range of issues which may impact on their old age. Despite this uncertainty, a clear preference emerged for community-based services which support people to remain in their own homes. This suggests that there is a need for good information about the kind of services which are available in particular communities and how to access these. We have therefore recommended that the Scottish Government ensures people are fully informed about their entitlements to pension, care and support services, and that this information is available online, by telephone and in face-to-face settings⁸.

Conclusion

Ensuring that communities have the capacity to provide care and support for people as they get older will be central to achieving the Scottish Government's stated desire to shift resources from institutional to community settings. In our recent evidence⁹ to the Finance Committee on its scrutiny of the draft budget and spending review, we therefore recommended that the Scottish Government ensure that a higher priority is given to funding for voluntary and community organisations contributing to improved health and wellbeing outcomes. The benefits of greater investment in preventative support for older people are clear, and we hope the Scottish Government continues

³ <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-news/patient-malnutrition-signs-not-being-checked-study/>

⁴ http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_127424.pdf

⁵ <http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk/scotland/files/2011/10/CFS-response-to-the-Scottish-Governments-Draft-National-Strategy-for-Housing-for-Older-People.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk/scotland/files/2010/10/CFS-response-to-Wider-planning-for-an-ageing-population.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk/scotland/files/2011/09/Life-after-work.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk/scotland/files/2011/09/Life-after-work.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk/scotland/files/2011/09/Draft-Budget-2012-13-Call-for-evidence.pdf>

to commit¹⁰ to developing and extending preventative services that enable older people to remain at home, including food services, handyperson services and equipment and housing adaptations.

I hope that this evidence is helpful to the committee in its deliberations. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance, at sarah.oneill@consumerfocus.org.uk or on 0141 226 5261.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah O'Neill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Sarah O'Neill
Director of Policy

¹⁰ Scottish Government. 2011. *Reshaping care for older people: a programme for change 2011-2021*