

Independent Care Matters

the newsletter for independent care providers in York
and North Yorkshire

Care providers call for mass Protest Petition over low fees

Issue 6

Winter/Spring 2006

Care providers have called for a mass Protest Petition to be organised by ICG and sent to North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council—and to the **Government**—to demand that the rising costs of looking after publicly funded clients in care homes and those receiving home care, are met.

Quite simply: not enough money is being put into adult social care and this means that the costs of care for all clients is not being properly funded—so how is quality to be maintained and raised? Also, fewer people are qualifying for care. Both these issues are putting vulnerable people at risk.

At an Emergency Meeting in New Earswick care providers also demanded that the local authorities come back to the negotiating table with ICG over their proposals to increase fees this year by only 2.8% (NYCC) and 2.3% (CYC) when costs of providing care have gone up by 6.8%. Providers also protested at different rates being paid for the same care depending upon the length of time the person has been receiving care. **How can it be right to pay a lower rate for someone who has been a client for several years than the rate paid for a new client?**

For more details of the protest see page 7.



Inside this issue:

<i>Care providers meet with MPs</i>	2
<i>ICG Chair</i>	3
<i>Membership of ICG</i>	4
<i>Your letters</i>	6/7
<i>News in brief</i>	7
<i>Protest Petition</i>	7
<i>Training news</i>	8

Scarborough and Whitby MP Robert Goodwill spends day as a care worker and expresses his admiration for their work

Conservative MP Robert Goodwill has highlighted social care by spending a day as a care worker in his constituency—working both in home care and a care home.

Robert praised the work being done in the independent care sector. He said 'Care workers are the unsung heroes in our community. They are doing a very valuable job for low wages. They have every right to expect that a service commissioned by the local authority should be properly funded so that they can be paid at the rate they deserve for the sterling work that they do.'

Care workers and clients told Robert of the problems caused by NYCC raising the eligibility criteria to 'critical' which has meant that vulnerable people have had their services reduced or withdrawn and that far fewer people now qualify for help. To receive any help in North Yorkshire now a person must be in a serious situation. This has also had a detrimental effect on care workers and their job satisfaction.

The local authorities have told ICG that they do not receive sufficient money from Government—but this response goes nowhere to solving the problem.

ICG thanks Robert for his interest in the care sector. His day as a care worker was featured on BBC Look North.





ICG meetings giving care providers the opportunity to meet with their MPs around North Yorkshire and York have been well attended. Meetings were held with the Rt Hon William Hague, John Greenway, Robert Goodwill, Hugh Bailey, John Grogan and Rt Hon David Curry. *It was not possible to arrange a meeting with Anne McIntosh.* Issues raised included:



- **fees** paid by local authorities for publicly funded clients not being sufficient (and not taking account of the JRF Fair Price for Care) leading to low wages for staff



- **NYCC in-house care**—higher cost & unfair competition

- **NYCC restricting client choice**—to in-house care

- **CRB checks:** lack of portability bringing extra cost

- **CYC aged contracts** (long term clients being paid at a lower rate for the same care)

- **NYCC eligibility criteria set at 'critical'** and the distress being caused to vulnerable people

- **NYCC perceived lack of partnership** with sector

- **Funded Nursing Care allowance** not being sufficient to

cover increasing nursing needs; nursing homes that help a person to improved health being penalised when the FNC is reduced on re-assessment—so good work is not rewarded.

- problems with not being paid by **Direct Payments** recipients.



Here are pictures from some of the meetings.

ICG is grateful to all the MPs who met with care providers and took up the issues raised including **Phil Willis MP** who met providers last year.



A message from the Chair

Crunch time approaches.....

It has been quite a challenge this time as I come to write a piece for this issue of *Independent Care Matters*. I feel we have come to a critical stage. There have of course, been many difficult times as we all know.... but somehow things just feel different this time. I have thought long and hard about what I can say in a few words to sum up the feelings that are out there? It has not been easy.

In the last few months we have witnessed the independent care sector moving closer and closer towards crisis point.

The difficulty for us though is that those in power are still saying 'crisis...what crisis?' My view is that if they cannot see what is fast approaching then they really do have their heads buried in the sand.

The sector is not against change, but needs help in adapting to these changes. **We cannot continue to raise the quality of care without being paid a fair price for the work that we do, and we cannot continue to absorb the ever-increasing costs of regulation.** Government tell us to negotiate with local authorities but there seems to be no such thing as negotiation.

I am particularly saddened that for the first time ever we have not been able to reach agreement with North Yorkshire County Council or the City of York Council over fee levels. The current position is unsustainable.

Don't get me wrong; it is not all down to local authorities as they under-funded, so **Government must take a large part of the blame**...we too have our failings and must work smarter.

If the future is all about **choice** as the *White Paper* makes clear, then we need to make sure that the independent sector remains strong in the future to provide that **choice. How good it would be to hear from Government and Councillors alike that they value the work the sector undertakes....** and just why should our staff not be able to enjoy all the benefits that those in the public sector do—especially pensions? It is without question at best unfair and at worst immoral!

The public sector needs us, as without independent providers, the whole system would collapse. We are tired of being knocked all the time by Government.

We are more than willing to work in partnership, but we must be listened to and respected.

As we approach this critical period it is vital that we maintain **unity** within the sector. This has never been more important. It is time to stand up and be counted and put any differences aside. We simply must work together and continue our struggle for recognition. It will not be easy, nor quick, but we must do it for the welfare of all the vulnerable people in our care.

Mike Padgham

Chair of ICG

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MRSA? Not in our Homes

ICG Director John Fisher shares his views on the importance of effective infection control ...

We needed to address the rising importance of infection control. At **Fisher Partnership Group** we were convinced that the **Viroklenz** system would bring us a more focussed cleaning regime to prevent the threat of MRSA and other dangerous bacteria and viruses.

Our action was prompted by a recent report in the Care Home press on research conducted in Leeds that indicated **significant numbers of care home residents admitted to hospital wards were carrying MRSA**. As a result scientists from Leeds NHS Trust had launched an investigation into the infection rates of the superbug amongst elderly residents in Yorkshire Care Homes.

Our experience at **Fisher Partnership** is quite the reverse. Some residents have been admitted to hospital for unrelated treatments and have returned to us with the bug. Of course we have always practised sound barrier nursing techniques but felt we needed to take the initiative with Bio-security and reassure staff and residents by putting emphasis on effective measures to prevent the spread of any infection.

‘MRSA is deadly—we cannot be complacent’

With the help of **Harrogate based bio-chemical company Envirocair** we have introduced a new cleaning regime using their unique **Viroklenz** range of highly effective bio-cleansers that kill MRSA, other bacteria and viruses in seconds. **Viroklenz not only kills instantly but also will remain active creating a barrier that will continue to kill harmful bacteria long after the initial application, even when dry.**

Obviously, we wanted to know if this system had been validated and Paul Pelham, Director for Research and Development at **Envirocair** offers assurance that **Viroklenz Bio-cleanser** has passed stringent trials for efficacy and safety at microbiology departments in leading UK teaching hospitals.

Now, the latest development, the **Viroklenz Air Sanitiser** eliminates harmful airborne bacteria including **MRSA** and also the **H5N1 Bird Flu** virus. The unique technology within the unit not only kills the harmful bacteria on contact but also traps it forever, working on a similar principle to a catalytic converter.

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Your letters ...

Dear ICG

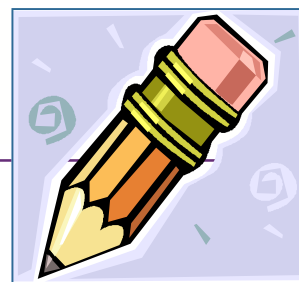
I very much enjoyed your meeting last week and I certainly enjoyed meeting William Hague.

What I would like to know is when are the powers that be ever going to realise that many of the real carers of this world are middle aged men and women who have cared for family, friend or parent and who now want to use their skills to care for others and to earn a living.

They may not be interested in obtaining qualifications but nevertheless have such a lot to give to the care sector. **Person-centred care is what life is all about.** The care industry should not make the same mistake as some major retailers have made by putting academia above care.

By all means train people but let's not lose the care element.

Kind regards
Sandra Kreutzer-Brett



Dear ICG

My aunt is a private client in a York nursing home where she is being well

looked after. I have just received notification that her fees are to rise this year by 11% and I am very angry about it. I believe that that the reason for this large increase is that the local authority is not paying the correct price for the publicly funded residents and that the home has to get enough money in from somewhere in order to run properly.

My aunt has had to sell her house in order to be cared for and it is a disgrace that she is having to subsidise others who should be paid for from the public purse. She is now paying 35% more than someone who gets public funding. When is someone going to do something about this situation?

John Bennett
York

Dear ICG

As Matron of a nursing home in Northallerton, I should like to air my concerns about the current system of care funding granted by NYCC.

The 'Care in the Community' programme that is offered to the elderly to enable them to stay in their own homes, thereby promoting independence, is a wonderful concept and I fully support the idea.

It does, however, have an effect on the ultimate level of dependency of the residents when they are eventually admitted to a nursing home. They are invariably **very highly dependent**, yet the fees paid by the local authority do not usually reflect the situation. On every side the proprietors of nursing homes are beset by the financial demands of never ending legislation constantly being put into place. The rising cost of Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) and Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) checks together with the increase in CSCI inspection charges also have an impact. **Every year operating costs spiral upwards but fees are persistently kept down.**

Such cost factors do not appear to be properly taken into account when the local authority determines the funding levels for care fees. We

are constantly (and rightly) expected to meet high standards set by CSCI. This we all strive to achieve under very difficult circumstances. Yet due to the lack of adequate funding the very people that are responsible for looking after vulnerable residents are expected to do so for low wages compared to other sectors of employment. Staff become worn down, disillusioned and demoralised as they perceive their efforts are not valued or rewarded.

Surely this situation cannot be allowed to continue. Old age comes to us all. With the percentage of over 65s predicted to rise dramatically within a decade adequate funds have to be found and urgently.

Properly determined funding needs to be forthcoming and soon to ensure care staff such as myself and my team can continue providing excellent care, yet also feel we are being valued for our contribution.

How many more homes need to close before someone wakes up to the serious financial problem facing the industry?

Yours sincerely

Sheila Thomson
Southwoods Nursing Home

The fee paid currently in North Yorkshire for medium band nursing care is £429 pw.

Dear ICG

I am very concerned about the situation in North Yorkshire regarding fees. The problems we have with elderly care are acute and not, in my experience, typical of the situation which exists in other parts of the country. We still appear to have to work very much on a 'them and us' (i.e. private versus public sector) basis, with all previous thought and/or statement of working in partnership to provide solutions being very much forgotten.

Despite our continual protestations, fee levels paid for care for individuals requiring funding from social services remains pitiful in the county. They fall significantly below that paid in other counties which have acknowledged (to an extent) the fair price argument based on the Joseph Rowntree model and awarded fee increases which allow providers to make the profits necessary to facilitate re-investment and improvement of facilities.

The fees currently paid for elderly care (residential) is £308 per week in North Yorkshire, £336 per week for service users with dementia.

The fees in Cumbria, for example, for residential care are £348 per week and £405 per week respectively. This means homes in Cumbria receive 13% higher fees for residential clients and 20.54% higher fees for clients with dementia than those in North Yorkshire - yet the costs are no higher in Cumbria.

In addition to this, referrals for individuals who genuinely require dedicated care in a care home, appear now not to being made - and I have seen recently home care providers report that their services have been drastically cut with an obvious impact upon vulnerable

people at home needing support, care and attention.

The biggest problem with care has always been that too much money is taken up by people pushing paper - before it ever gets to the people requiring care. Good luck with your negotiations on our behalf and thanks for ever attempting to improve a situation, which is clearly unique to the people of North Yorkshire and clearly requires some fundamental correction and improvement.

Name and Address supplied

Dear ICG

We hear from NYCC that it is increasing fees at a similar rate to other local authorities this year. We need to bear in mind that this means little when the starting points are so different. For example: Hampshire County Council is raising its fees by 2.5% this year. This means that nursing homes will get £430 PLUS the FNC allowance of £83 or £133 making a total of £513 or £563 per week which shows the £442 and £493 is totally inadequate.

Malcolm Haigh
Anley Hall

Care providers call for more money for adult social care



News in brief

Strategic commissioning

Both City of York and North Yorkshire County Council are undertaking work on strategic commissioning for adult social care which should lead to some accurate forecasting of what services will be needed in the future. There are several strands to the work:

- Strategic needs analysis
- Strategy development
- Outcome based strategic commissioning
- Strategic development of the market
- Cost factor analysis
- Communications strategy and launch
- Strategy implementation

ICG is on the Project Reference Group and has been invited to take part in some of the workshops—representing independent sector care providers.

CRB checks

There remains confusion around CRB checks. At its last meeting with CSCI ICG was told that providers should keep new CRB checks securely until the next inspection. Once checked they should be destroyed & a log kept of the disclosure reference number with the person's name and position.

CG has pressed for CRB checks to be portable from one job to another. Safeguards could be put in place such as a requirement to make a formal check with the previous employer. Currently we have the ridiculous situation where a person with a month old CRB check has to have another done at a cost of £36 + the POVA check of £6. This is seen as an unfair tax on the employer.

CSCI— In view of the 15% increase in CSCI charges ICG has requested that providers be allowed to pay monthly or quarterly. CSCI will consider this.

STOP PRESS: Protest Petition

Having consulted its members ICG has rejected the proposals of NYCC and CYC for inadequate fee increases for 2006-2007.

Chair Mike Padgham says: 'People are angry that there has been no negotiation. There are many increased charges this year for looking after people including minimum wage up 6%, utilities 35%, rates, cost of regulation 15%. All this has to be paid for and is not being taken into account by the local authorities or the Government. The sector has been under-funded for years.' ICG now has a mandate to co-ordinate a MASS PROTEST PETITION and a media campaign. It will be calling on all care providers to collect signatures and contribute to a fighting fund.

The meeting at New Earswick was attended by care providers representing 3,500 beds, 22,000 hours of home care a week and 50 day care places. Many more providers could not attend because of pressures at work but have expressed support.

Send your letters to ICG ...address on back page



The voice of independent care providers in York and N Yorkshire

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ICG represents independent care providers in York & North Yorkshire including care home providers for all client groups, domiciliary care agencies, supported living and extra care housing providers, and day centres in the private and voluntary parts of the independent sector.

Independent Care Matters is sent currently to all care providers in York and North Yorkshire, all City Councillors, all County Councillors, senior managers and Chairs of the PCTs, Borough and District Councils, NHS Trusts, Strategic Health Authority, to all local MPs and MEPs and senior managers at NYCC & CYC.

QUALITY MANAGEMENT
See enclosed with this issue information on a Quality Management System—for care homes and home care agencies—that can help you meet the Care Standards with all policies and procedures. **Special offer for ICG members.** Speak to Peter Hawkins about **Required Systems** on 01236 782 477

Training news from Skills for Care

News from the Social Care Brokerage Service

As reported in the last edition of *Independent Care Matters* the York and North Yorkshire Social Care Skills Brokerage Service has been working with a high volume of employers supporting them with their training and development needs.

The biggest demand has been for facilitating access to the **Train to Gain** pilot, which in terms of demand has been a **huge success**, not only here but in other parts of the country too. This pilot runs until 30 September 2006 however **the deadline for registering employees onto the programme has been reached**— it was 31 March 2006.

Because of the success of the Train to Gain pilots, there will be a national roll-out of the programme from April 2006 however because of the overlap with the existing pilot, **employers in this sub-region, not already registered, will not be able to access Train to Gain until August 2006.**

During this time the brokerage will be contacting employers to seek feedback on **Train to Gain** as well as continuing to help employers with other training issues. We have just had confirmation from Skills for Care that their TSI funding will continue until March 2007 which means that there are still means of support for employers with training and qualifications relating to the National Minimum Standards. **The Social Care Skills Brokerage Service offers impartial information, advice and practical support to small and medium size employers in our sector on skills and training.** The Social Care Skills Brokerage Service is funded by the Learning and Skills Council North Yorkshire. For more information please contact us on 01904 520 170 or e-mail Jeyda Williams at jeyda.williams@skillsforcare.org.uk

