



advice and support for older age

**Independent
Age**

Health Education England: Shape of caring review

September 28 2015



About Independent Age

Independent Age is a growing charity helping older people across the UK to live more independent, fulfilling lives.

Founded over 150 years ago, we are an established voice for older people and their families and carers, offering free advice and information and providing services, such as befriending, to promote wellbeing and reduce loneliness.

In addition to this, we use the knowledge and understanding gained from our frontline services to campaign on issues that affect older people, like poverty, loneliness and carers' rights.

For more information, visit our website www.independentage.org

Speak to one of our advisers for free and confidential advice and information. Lines are open Monday to Friday between 10am - 4.30pm. Freephone 0800 319 6789 or email advice@independentage.org

Independent Age is also a member of the Care and Support Alliance: a consortium of over 75 organisations that represent and support older and disabled people campaigning to keep adult care funding and reform on the political agenda.

Independent Age main comments

Independent Age welcomes the objectives of this review into workforce planning, training and education for health professionals. We agree that for far too long the educational needs of care assistants have been neglected within the healthcare profession despite their essential role in caring for patients. We believe that Lord Willis is correct in his description of the review as 'timely' following NHS England's Five Year Forward View with its emphasis on a health workforce focused on community care and public health. The review is correct in its assessment that a more integrated future for health will demand more from care assistants meaning that they should be invested in to achieve a high standard of care for all.

Methodology and principles

We support the methodology of the review and the structure concentrating on (i) education and training, (ii) career structures and (iii) culture.

General principles

Independent Age believes that the review is justified in calling for greater flexibility across health education and training. The promotion of work-based training for care assistants, as well as nurses, is an essential part of this objective. The opportunity for care assistants to continue working while undertaking education and training courses should be fully incorporated into the commissioning process of Health Education England. Lord Willis's commitment to provide such training to the current workforce can only be right when we know that 60% of those currently working are expected to still be working in ten years' time. The review promotes the use of research evidence to inform everyday working and the opportunity for care assistants and nurses to pursue academic research themselves. Independent Age believes that research evidence of good practice in healthcare should be pursued whenever possible. Research supported training or guidance can improve quality of care for patients, creates a supportive culture among professionals and is relatively inexpensive. Despite our agreement with the general principle, we believe it should be noted that academic research will only be of interest to a small group of care assistants and health workers. There remains a risk of alienating those members of staff who do not wish to take part in academic research and prefer to carry out their day-to-day caring duties. Academic research should not therefore be overemphasised to the detriment of securing support for research-based training among the general workforce.

Enhancing co-production and the voice of the patient

We believe that, wherever possible, the voice of patients and carers should inform education and training. Independent Age would also like to commend the National Midwifery Council for including service users and carers on recruitment and curriculum panels. We fully support the review calling for the patient-carer voice to systematically inform education and training. Older people represent the largest group of healthcare services and a significant proportion of carers –

particularly carers who provide care for more than fifty hours each week¹. We believe that members of older people's forums and carers associations should be approached to be panel members.

Valuing care assistants

As stated in the introduction to this submission, we believe that care assistants, patients and the wider health workforce itself have been let down by underinvestment in the education and training of care assistants.

The review is right to repeat the fact that care assistants fulfil more hands on care than any other worker. The lack of consistent training, supervision and job title is very confusing for all involved including patients who should always have confidence in the capabilities of the people looking after them. As our society ages and increasing numbers of people rely on personal care, it will become increasingly important for job roles to be consistent. This will be particularly relevant for older people living with dementia which, it is estimated, will exceed one million by 2030².

The review defers to Health Education England's *Talent for Care* programme for the development of a formal criteria for the support workforce in the NHS (including care assistants and other workers on NHS work bands 1-4). Independent Age supports these principles to formalise, standardise and expand the route of care assistants into primary training and further qualifications.

Care certificate

The review voices its support that within five years, the majority of frontline healthcare support workers will have the Care Certificate developed by Skills for Care. Independent Age agrees with the aims and standards of the care certificate and believes that the decision by the government to not make the certificate mandatory for care workers was a missed opportunity. We encourage Health Education England to ensure that the necessary time and resources are allocated within any commissioning of education and training services to ensure that the care certificate is properly delivered. We are concerned that there is a possibility that the care certificate is being delivered in care settings inappropriately with poor induction procedures and very little supervision of care assistants in their first few weeks of work. We urge Health Education England to ensure the care certificate is properly delivered and follow-up training and refresher courses are made available. We particularly support the recommendation of an e-portfolio tool to sign-off competencies on a national database for care assistants. Following implementation of this recommendation we believe that a standardised portfolio skills passport should be developed for both nurses and care assistants. We hope that this development could overcome some of the current issues concerning care assistants who change employers and are required to undertake duplicate training or do not receive proper inductions as a result of presumed experience.

¹ Age UK / Carers UK (2015), *Caring into later life: The growing pressure on older carers*

² Alzheimer's Research UK (2015), *Defeat Dementia: The evidence and a vision for action*

We believe the review is right in its analysis that the regulation of care assistants can only follow such standardisation of education and training requirements. Consequently, we support the development of the Higher Care Certificate to provide a nationally consistent standard of skills for care workers. However, we have serious concerns that without allocation of the necessary resources and careful monitoring of delivery, the certificate could fail to achieve its principal objective of standardising education and training.

Widening access for care assistants to enter the nursing profession

We believe that health education should support career progression wherever possible. We endorse the proposals to support care assistants who want to pursue a nursing qualification. We agree that this development is natural and should be embraced by the sector as a means of supporting staff and indeed attracting care workers to the sector. With authoritative evidence that the UK born population is not attracted to the care sector³, any attempts to make the sector more attractive is most welcome. The review states that a recent survey revealed that 35% of care assistants would like to make the move to qualify as a nurse. This is a significant figure and systems should be in place to support these individuals. However, this initiative should complement reform of education and training for care workers. Health Education England should be careful not to alienate or undermine care assistants by presuming they would like to become nurses. As the review suggests, care assistants should understand potential career progression, which includes nursing, but also opportunities within care such as management and supervisory roles.

Assuring flexibility in nursing

The review is right to emphasise the growing need for nurses to deliver whole-person care. The need for person-centred care is fundamental to both NHS England's Five Year Forward View and The Care Act. Older people are especially identified as requiring such care due to people aged 65 and over being the largest demographic group with long-term health problems.

We believe that attempts to improve attrition rates for nursing students by providing pre-degree care experience has the potential to not only prepare nursing students for the demands of their future work, but also improve working relationships within the healthcare workforce between care assistants and nurses. Moreover, these schemes should be used to make care assistants aware of career progression in the health sector including nursing.

We support the recommendation that training for whole-person care should be achieved in the first two years of core training for pre-registration nurses. The inclusion of education regarding public health, older-person health and self-care in these first two years is essential if Health Education England is to support the model of whole-person care.

³ Warwick Institute for Employment Research (2014), *Determinants of the Composition of the Workforce in Low Skilled Sectors of the UK Economy: Social Care and Retail Sectors*

The review recommends serious consideration of community care as a new field for specialism. We believe that community care should be introduced as an area of specialisation as the NHS attempts to move away from the current bias towards acute services. The needs of our ageing population will depend on both high quality acute services and community care. The inclusion of community care as an area of specialism would be a significant development. It would make student nurses aware of the benefits of such work and avoid potential shortfalls in the community care workforce, which the review correctly identifies. We welcome the recommendation for a national consultation on this issue.

In addition to a consultation on the inclusion of community care as a new specialism for pre-registration nursing students, Independent Age believes that Health Education England should consult on the need for geriatrics to become a new specialisation. As our society ages, all health systems will have to adapt to the needs of older people. The need for expert knowledge in this area cannot be over emphasised as our conception of what a health system should deliver expands beyond management of disease to improving function and quality of life in later life. Indeed we know that the total number of people aged 50 and over living with a serious illness is likely to rise to 3.4 million in England and 4 million in the UK as a whole by 2025⁴. It is essential that nurses are trained to ensure that older adults receive care in line with physiological and psychological need that differentiate them from younger adults⁵. We believe that older people constituting the largest demographic group who use healthcare services warrant a specialism which goes beyond whole-person care training.

The attainment of expert knowledge in geriatrics will also provide nurses with the opportunity to work in many different settings during their working lives, including hospitals, nursing homes and the patient's own home.

Recommendation 18

We would support any attempts by Health Education England to widen recommendation 18 to develop a survey of care assistants to improve care practice and education delivery.

⁴ ILC-UK (2015), *Serious illness in the over 50s*

⁵ Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing (2011), *Specialty Nursing Association Global Vision Statement on Care of Older Adults*